THE SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF PÈRE DIDON

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THE SPIRITUAL LETTERS

OF

PÈRE DIDON, O.S.D.

BY PÈRE DIDON.

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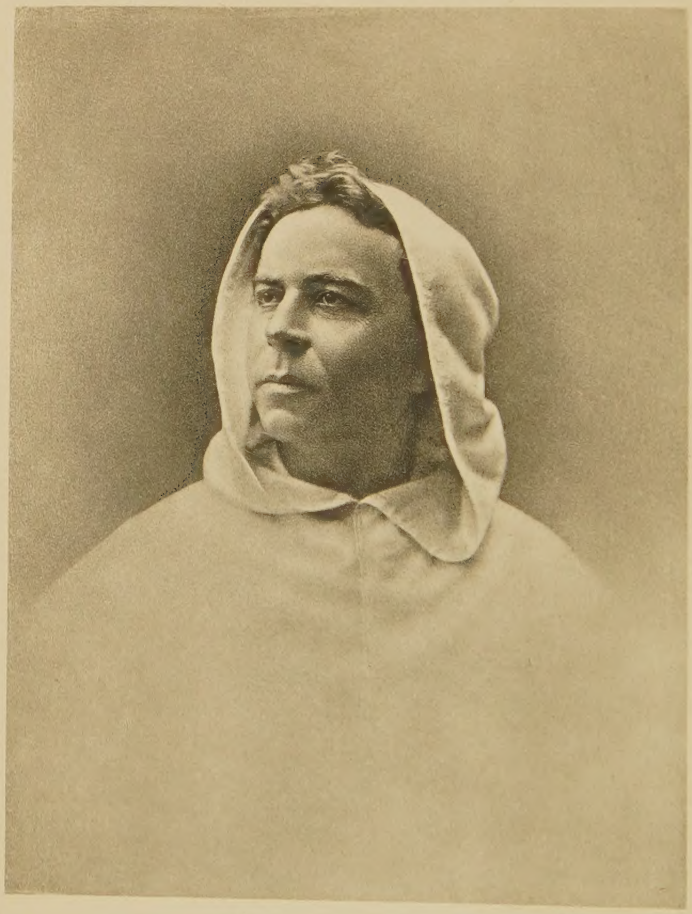

f. H. Didon

THE SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF PÈRE DIDON, O.S.D.

TRANSLATED BY

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DRYDEN HOUSE, GERRARD STREET, W.

1906

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PREFACE

On March 13, 1900, Père Didon died suddenly at Toulouse. He succumbed to an attack of angina pectoris while in the prime of life, escaping the infirmity of old age and the gradual decay of natural power. God spared him those down-grade years which to such a nature as his would have been indeed hard to bear.

Père Didon's influence over minds and souls during the last quarter of the century was such that a deep interest must attach to all that relates to him and all that he wrote. His books will be edited afresh, his sermons will be published, his life written; but these Letters bring the reader closely into contact with the living man.

Those who knew and loved him will find something of his noble soul in these eloquent and stirring pages, which are indeed an echo of the power which inspired him.

Père Didon had at once the zeal of an apostle and the ardour of a knight; while still a youth he donned

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the Badge of the Cross. Strife did not dismay him ; on the contrary, an obstacle acted on him as a spur, and he marched, with visor lifted, crucifix in hand, to the conquest of souls.

Two great passions shared his life—love of CHRIST and love of those around him. With unslacking devotion he laboured, in order that some rays of the Divine Light might shine into this modern world to which he was attached by so many ties. Like ST. PAUL he felt drawn towards the Gentiles.

Born of a mother strong and vigorous alike in body and soul ; the son of the savage mountains of Grésivaudan, where he was reared amid snow-clad peaks and barren rocks, he always bore the twofold mark of that strong affection and those austere surroundings.

His instincts carried him to the heroic ; his virtue kept him there. He had a disgust of all that is low, vulgar, and trivial ; of all that savours of pettiness and restriction. His motto was ' Keep ever rising.' And he expected the same thoroughness from others ; thus he did not hesitate to write :—

' The time has come for full sacrifice, for entire holocausts ; we must suffer ; we are worth nothing till we have been brayed in the mortar. . . .'

'A life which has not its Calvary is a punishment from GOD.'

But though he showed souls the blood-stained prospects of sacrificial self-immolation, he did not fail to point out in the Gospel the fair attractive beauty of Him Who was to be their Master, their Example, and their Friend; of Whom he said, 'CHRIST is my divine passion.'

Happy are the souls who at the dawn of life receive such instruction, and are the object of a love of so holy and paternal a character; they have been born into life by the blood and tears of the apostle; between him and them the breath of the Spirit has passed, creating for time and eternity bonds of superhuman attachment, of indestructible gratitude. But such have not the right to keep for themselves alone the words of life which should spread far and wide. It is their duty to forget their own personality, and to become merely, as in this case, a connecting link between the apostle and souls unknown who also thirst for the Divine Ideal, who suffer with longing for the Infinite.

May the thoughts, so sincerely religious, so lofty, which are contained in these pages, sink deeply into those souls; may they awaken in them noble ambitions, the desire of what is great, divine, eternal,

and guide them more and more towards the glorious light of GOD.

We trust that CHRIST, of His infinite goodness, will give holy effect to this voice from beyond the grave, and that He will abundantly bless this last mission of His warrior-servant.

THE SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF PÈRE DIDON

1

Collège Saint-Charles, Saint-Brieuc: August 9, 1875.

Your letter is a proof of great confidence in me, since to you I am 'a stranger.' I am indeed touched by this confidence which does you honour, as it honours me.

You have a mind which is open to the light, a heart restless because it is empty and starving; an imagination affected by the ideal, a soul worth making God's alone.

Such gifts are precious, yet terrible. I hope you will misuse none of them. Life spreads cunning snares in our path; God's angel must lead us by the hand, for he only can show us how to avoid them.

If you are such as I judge you to be, the world will not long be seductive: its mirages will not long deceive you, and you know that our dreams here below are a thousand times more attractive than the most glorious reality.

So, sooner or later, willingly or unwillingly, you will have to turn towards God, to live in Him and to put Him above everything. By what road will you come to this? Will it be flowery or steep, dug in the rock or flung across precipices? You certainly do not know: but one day, perhaps, I shall be able to tell you.

Just now you love the light, and are seeking after truth; by God's help I will show you some bright rays of it. Believe me that they will be enough to dim for you the false flashes of this world.

God be with you till we meet, if He so will.

P.S.—I am in Brittany till the 16th, and shall not be back in Paris till about the 20th or 23rd.

2

September 2, 1875.

As a matter of fact, I am in bed. I have just escaped a serious illness, and am no longer in pain. However, I am not quite well yet: the disease, though conquered, is retiring slowly, and I still hear its last grumblings in the distance. The doctor condemns me to my room for several days, and I shall not even hear Mass to-morrow.

So you will understand, my child, that I am under orders, and must not come downstairs, although I should like to do so, and fancy that I am strong enough.

I wonder whether it will be granted to me to see you. I must let myself be guided by Him Who governs all things, and Whose ineffable fatherly kindness I have so often experienced.

May God bless you and give you peace! Know this, my child, that He only is sufficiently *Infinite* to fill this poor fathomless heart which He has given us.

Trust in Him: He is not a savage Master, but a Father. If you are destined to be saved through me, we shall certainly meet. *That seems to me already decreed.* But, as you know, even moments are in His power, and they are sometimes further off than our wishes would have them.

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When do you leave?

I give you my blessing, my child, and pray God to give you the divine strength which keeps the heart in check, which transfigures it by raising it above all and sacrificing it to God. Good-bye.

3

Paris: September 14, 1875.

I feel sure you are awaiting this letter with impatience, and I am not so cruel as to add to the pain of suspense by delay.

You were quite right, my child, to let your pen express the feelings of your heart with confidence. The soul which reveals itself is good, that which hides itself is bad. Transparency is a mark of true uplifted hearts. It is only necessary to veil and conceal ourselves when we are in the company of the wicked, the profane, the unworthy.

Thank God, my child, that He has shed upon you some beams of His glorious light. That they have made you tremble is a proof that your soul is fitted to receive them, and it will depend upon yourself henceforth whether they become more abundant, more bright and radiant. The ground of your soul has been preserved in the midst of the eddies of your life. An angel unseen has kept the gate, often without your knowledge, but *the approaches*, *the surfaces* have been rather at the mercy of passers-by and faithless friends.

I want you for the future to dig a ditch around it and to set up ramparts; or to train *some bull-dogs*, in order to defend yourself against useless and bothering folk as well as against dangerous vagrants.

And now listen to the solemn and kindly advice

of a disinterested and devoted heart. Although you are unaware of it, the *earthly* is enormously strong within you: conquer it, trample it under foot. The *human* in you, too, is working like yeast, and the proof of it is shown in those love-dreams which, half unconsciously, you cherish, and whose gleams so bewilder you that you cannot see life on its real side: this human weakness must be overcome. Leave self behind and, with a sweep of your noble soul, forget yourself and look up to God. The *divine* is slumbering in your heart: do you know what is the meaning of the sufferings, the deadly dulness, the hopeless sadness of life, of the despair which hung on the weary hours you have passed? You thought it was the cry of human love for which your heart is starving. No, no, my child; it is an evidence that you love; it is the pressing appeal of God Himself. Will you listen to it and follow it?

The way will be rough, with fiery deserts and lonely wilds to be passed through; you will have to struggle, to die. The Promised Land is to be gained only by the brave and the victorious; the soft-natured, the lukewarm, and the cowards may remain in Egypt and eat their full-flavoured leeks.

Good-bye, my child; my blessing be on you. I feel sure that this letter will say those words to your soul which it needs if it is to dwell in regions above the earth, where God is calling it. Pass your life much with your mother, under her shadow; for the endearments of a mother remind us of God's infinite love. As to myself, I am very much better: this illness has certainly set me up.

P.S.—Another day I shall send you the beautiful lines of Pythagoras on condition that you learn them by heart and repeat them every day.

4

Paris : October 4, 1875.

My Child,—I am sending you these few lines so that, when you arrive at Cannes, you may find your room the less chilly and dark.

To lead the higher life, you cannot do without the light from heaven above, which threatened for a time to become hidden from your eyes. The earth is not good enough for you ; and if you squandered your heart and your youth on it, you would be a criminal. Keep for God and His Christ what They have given you.

Your temperament lays you open to serious dangers. Your fortifications are not high enough ; it is too easy for the irreligious to enter, not perhaps into the inmost recesses, but still into the porch and entrance of your heart. Even that is too much. In a soul which knows its own eternal worth the whole is sacred ; nothing satanic, nothing common, ought to touch even the hem of its robe.

Those letters of D.'s—those *dead leaves* which you sent me in your bunch of *green leaves*—show tokens of a simple, upright nature and a warm, affectionate heart. Preserve this tender memory in the depths of your heart, and may this tomb always have in you fresh flowers to deck it and green trees to shade it.

Besides, Père Gratry was fond of him, which for me is enough to prove that there was some reflection of God in his soul. He was more like a flowering shrub than an oak-tree. He quickly ran his course, and just flowered one spring time. Doubtless you saw him at his best on earth, and perhaps you were his sweetest ray of earthly light. Now he lives an

idealised existence, and I, who believe in the unceasing influence of the spirit-world and of the departed over us, am persuaded that this vanished friend continues invisibly to watch over and help you.

Good-bye, my child. I pray God to give you courage in every struggle and strength in each act of self-sacrifice. *Mount Horeb* is high, and there is a march of forty days and nights, with a short rest under the juniper tree, and a modest meal of rude bread and cold water. That does not seem much; but, on the other hand, there is the angel of the Lord who rouses the traveller and says, 'Arise and eat.' Are you going to have the prophet's courage? Yes, you are.

In a day or two you shall have a copy of the second edition of my 'Lectures.'

I struck a good blow at St. Thomas Aquinas, and at the first onset got right into the fortress. My blessing on you; be strong.

5

Paris: October 14, 1876.

To every human life there are two sides, the great and the little; in every destiny there are two paths, the ignoble and the heroic. In your life, if you choose the little side, it will mean remaining what you are—irresolute, anxious, and a prey to those thoughts, both terrible and sweet, which come to excite and deceive your mind and heart. If you choose the great side, it will mean getting rid of self and following God's call. In short, the little side stands for being old-maidish; the great side represents marrying a man worthy of you; and if you do not find one, espousing the Christ and poor suffering

humanity, which is so miserable and so much in need of love.

The ignoble part in your destiny is that which you are treading, gathering as you go flowers which fade in your hand; running after the will-o'-the-wisp which amuses you and the butterflies which die as you grasp them. It is the path of living without purpose, on the wayward impulse of the head or heart: it ends in nothing, growing gradually darker as though leading us on imperceptibly to the sudden darkness of death. The heroic path is the path of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and *reckless* love of God. It is not given to many to follow it, for it is steep. It needs a hero-soul to brave its bareness, and the sphinx which guards the entrance. I believe you capable of taking it and remaining in it. You see, my child, that I judge of you according to your real worth.

One of these days, you will have to kneel down before your crucifix with bowed head and a heart ready to receive divine inspirations, and say to yourself: My life at present is meaningless, because it has no object. I see only two ways for such an one as myself to fill my place in the world and to glorify God; either to become the mother of a family, or to say to the poor, 'I will tend you as though you were my Christ Himself.'

You are the first young girl to whom I have ever spoken thus, and I am convinced that this is the only advice I can give which will brighten your life and preserve it. You can equally well become either a brave and tender mother, or a soul offered up to Christ; you must make your choice. God has caused you to meet with many kinds of affections in your life: some noble and pure, others transitory and deceptive, all insufficient. There is not one which can

fill the heart to its depths; God alone can satisfy us; and I know nothing more lofty or more sweet than those natures who, conscious of their deep longing, soar high above created beings, crying to God, 'Thou art my desire.'

God never fails them. He shines into them and endues them with perennial youth; He sheds down upon them torrents of love enough to fire the world.

Outside this, there is nothing but emptiness immeasurable. Believe those who have trodden the path of life before you, and have learned these glorious lessons in the school of self-sacrifice.

Just look now; it is autumn: the dead leaves are falling; the dreary wind whirls them away and plays with them; the sky is overcast. You see death at work in nature whose life is shorter even than our own. I love these stern lessons of Death's; and as I meditate upon the shortness of life while watching the fall of these leaves, which remind me that I too one day shall be like them, dried up and withered by death, I feel that truly everything is very wretched except God Who dies not, and the God-like souls who have learned to live in Him. Be one of these, my child; and may my letters help you *to die of your own accord* to your youth, your illusions, to all those countless vanities, which absorb us and lead us far away from God.

God has set me on your path at the dividing of the ways: one rises, the other descends to the depths. I do not want you to go downward. Go upwards; better to die than to diminish.

Live, therefore, and grow. I give you my blessing.

6

Paris : October 15, 1875.

May that being, so lavish of love, whose name you bear and who learned so well how to die utterly to things created, bless and cherish you ! May she open your eyes, fixed so obstinately either on the earth or the horizon, and lift them up to God, up to Christ who is calling you to His feet, where I would fain see you conquered and saved! This is my desire and my prayer ; this is the sad-coloured flower I offer you. Come, I say again, be worthy of your name.

7

Paris : November 19, 1875.

My Child,—No doubt you are again in the midst of the whirl of your life. It is a necessity of your nature. For you, action is imperative; inactivity would kill you. You must be always on the move. That is an excellent thing, and certainly I will never hamper a soul in its upward movements. Activity in itself is good because it predicates life; the important thing is to give it an upward direction. At the present moment you are *turning on your own axis* in that human orbit along which you have partly travelled ; you are seeking there *what cannot be found*, and you inquire of all you meet.

Believe me now, child that you are ; what you seek is not to be found in the human orbit; it is higher, it is in the Infinite ; I give you my word.

I should like to break off your life, and tear it up from this low earth into which it is sending such strong roots ; then I would throw it to God.

That alone is great. The most alluring things

that you may find among men will not keep your fancy for an hour. You will drain the cup in a breath, and say peevishly, 'I am thirsty, thirstier than ever. Who will give me to drink?'

Do you not see that all those insipid souls who say to you, 'The source is in me,' are either liars or dupes? The source is in Him alone Who said, 'O woman, if thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked of Me the living water which springeth up into everlasting life.' The others are poisoned cisterns whose water is brackish. It serves rather to increase thirst than to quench it: they who drink it fall into a stupor which ends in death.

You must take some of my faith, my child. Need I tell you that faith comes not by word of command, but has to be inspired? If only your soul is in communion with mine, you cannot help feeling encircled with the light. The light of God is my life. Like a shepherd on the mountains I breathe the strong pure air of the summits: I see the bright radiance of God, Who causes His first beams to fall upon the mountain-tops, and blesses them with His latest light.

At all events, you have faith; you have the religious instinct, so that you cannot forget God even when you would like to do so. You would be tormented in the depths of your nature by a kind of inexpressible weariness; you would be conscious of an infinite void which would rob you of rest. It is then most necessary, my child, for you to consider the tendency of your life and to turn it towards God. The reason why I have come into your life is that I may perform this holy deed: if you wish your soul to be precious to me, *go upward, ever upward and higher.* The plain in which you are running

about aimlessly is not your fatherland; you were never destined to those lowlands. If it had been so, by this time you would have been in the *swamps*, led astray by the will-o'-the-wisps and delighting in them.

Pray for me. I am working almost day and night. I am getting my book on 'Higher Education' through the press, and a tough job it is. Pity me. No! the brave need no pity in their fight for truth and God. They only need support, and noble-hearted love. Good-bye, my child; take courage. My blessing on you.

8

Paris: December 1, 1875.

My Child,—Be steadfast and strong; keep looking ever upward. I ought not to be a disturbing element in your life, neither will I; but rather I want to be a source of serene energy. If I thought that I were likely to hinder your growth or unsettle you, I should betake myself to my mountain and climb to its highest peak! You would never again have a word from me. But that is not the case.

You do well to give me a minute account of your daily life and your spiritual condition. Trust is one of the noblest sentiments of human nature: it honours him who gives it, and him to whom it is given. A trustful soul is always becoming better; a locked soul grows foul.

Hearts naturally noble are trustful, for they are always lying open. The light shines into them, and where light is there is wholesomeness.

I understand your nature thoroughly; I divined it from the first, and my judgment did not deceive me.

Do you feel now what sway human and earthly things have been having over your thoughts, your impressions, your whole life? Do you notice to what an extent the divine element is still overlaid? Will you have the courage for sacrifices—bloody, inexorable, heroic sacrifices?

My child, you are still full of romance and dreams. Your imagination and your heart strain after desires of ideal and platonic love.

Listen to me. Be greater than this; for human love is not the climax of life. Those who have told you so are either deceivers or deceived—I prefer to think the latter. The climax of life is God and the living Christ and the soul. Love is a phase of life. In a nature that is one and undivided, it is gradually merged into, or rather is irradiated by God. Trivial natures do not even conceive it, but are restricted to a mere animal feeling; and in brave but ill-disciplined hearts love oftentimes is entangled with matter and dies a natural death. You must then, my child, put God in the first place, and take Duty as your rule of life. If love lay hold of you, then you must slay and sacrifice all that is human, earthly—consequently perishable—in it in order that you may consecrate it to God.

I do not at all approve of your correspondence with X., a believer in *instinct* too; keep away from such! Not that there may be any danger for you; but it is unworthy of a nature like yours to bring the *lower instincts* into play, and you may be quite sure that they were working blindly in almost all those who have made advances to you.

It is trivial, debasing, and quite beneath you.

You must know, my poor child, that for the last three weeks I have been leading a killing life. I go

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to bed at midnight and rise before daylight, in order to get through the work in connection with my book on 'Higher Education,' and I have still a week's hard labour. Pray for me. If you have understood my mission and divined my spirit, you must know how much I need the ardent religious devotion of those who love me.

I do not want you to become absorbed in me, or in any other created thing.

What I desire is that you should rise nearer to God. I stretch out my hand to you, and bless you with a confident heart. Upward, ever upward!

9

Paris: December 29, 1875.

My Child,—Something or someone tells me that you have suffered from my silence; though I took care to send you a little book, which must have shown you that I was mindful of you and was praying for you. You are still too earthly (mark the word earthly) to be able to live on a drop of dew, a breeze from the mountains, and a ray of God's beautiful sun. On all sides your roots are spreading, seeking in rich, damp soils the moisture for which they thirst. I long to seize my axe and prune them all away; it would, however, kill you. I grant that human souls cannot be treated in the same way as the trees of the forest. The freedom of the soul must be respected; it must have the merit and joy of the sacrifices it has spontaneously made. Were your soul to become more *divine*, instead of more *earthly* and *human*, it would, of its own accord, give up searching for artificial life and unwholesome food in surroundings where everything earthly predominates, and where, despite yourself, you cannot fail to deteriorate by association.

What! you actually call it a sacrifice to give up correspondence with X., who was asking you to meet him? My poor child, such men are not worth looking at. 'I might convert them,' you say. Simple child that you are, undeceive yourself on that score; you will hardly convert those for whom you are *Eva Temptatrix*. You might just as well hope to convert the serpent himself. Eve did not convert anyone, not even her dear Adam; on the contrary she led him away, seduced him after having first fallen herself, and in her path she saw sorrows, disillusions, and trials grow and multiply. It is ever the same story.

Do not be another Eve; there are plenty without you; you are fit for a better part. God expects from you something greater and holier; He has protected you in countless dangers; He has aided you against yourself because He has plans for you; do not thwart them. He has allowed me to interfere at a critical time in your life, because apparently your eyes had to be opened to a world of which you had no suspicion. Providence never acts aimlessly; the smallest events in our lives often hide unspeakable treasures of love. Will you be able to respond to the inspiration from above? Will you not shrink from the sacrifice it requires? Sometimes I am afraid that you are not heroic. It is not enough to be merely good; you must be brave even to heroism.

You give way too much to feelings and dreams. My poor child, how fragile all that is! Go to the shores of the beautiful Mediterranean, with its melodious swell; look at the foam thrown on the beach by the waves as they break. Our dreams are like that, as pretty and as fragile as the foam which is destroyed by the very wave that bore it. Is it worth while staking our lives on such trifles?

Learn my hard lessons, my child; your soul is big enough to take them in, and your heart noble enough to use them to advantage.

As I read of your daily life, may I have the joy of watching you grow under the influence of the Divine Light.

I have nearly done my work, and have now only to prepare for my lectures at Marseilles: this is no light task, for my subject is a most difficult one this year, but I trust in God, Who always fights beside His brave followers.

I bless you. Be wise and brave—brave to despise the love of earth, wise to comprehend the infinite love of God. Good-bye; pray for me as I pray for you.

10

Marseilles: March 25, 1876.

Yes, my child, I am pleased with you. God bless you and guard you. A mighty power, invisible and sweet, enfolds and leads you; step forward and fear not. You are not alone now, and you will never be so again. Despise the earth, for it is not worthy of you; and since God has put divine light in your heart, do not desecrate it; let it shine forth, and you will be clothed in real beauty.

The sacrifice will be hard, but it will be an act of heroism. Now listen to what I say. I undertake to make something great of you. I loathe what is trivial and base, and hold this worn-out world utterly detestable. No noble nature should be buried in it and rot there. Leave it, and come to the mountain. What matter if you die there, since it is the abode of God and of love, and the threshold of eternity.

You may rely on me; I will lend you my hand,

and the angels of God, if need be, will lend you their wings.

And I do not hesitate to tell you that you will be a support in my life. You will abide before God in prayer for me, and you will labour with me in the work to which I have vowed myself. What a task for a hero it is! How often one is wounded in the fight; how often one faints by the way! You will pray God to pardon me, and to give me His strength in the midst of dangers. My public life is only just beginning, and I can see that I shall meet with formidable opposition; but I must advance in spite of all. The greatest power on earth is a heart that loves and which suffers before God in sacrifice. Will you be that power for me? Set about it in spirit at once.

You must withdraw yourself gradually from all those social entanglements which are utterly purposeless, and which act like a poisonous dust. The Spirit which is in you will guide you in this delicate business; you have but to follow His inspiration.

I was not able to go up to Notre-Dame de la Garde on Friday, and besides your first letter only reached me at ten o'clock that day. I had already prayed for you, and a sort of inward knowledge assured me that you were for God and had decided to follow Him.

I am with you. Good-bye.

11

Marseilles: April 1, 1876.

My dear Child,—Rejoice in God; away with despondency and sadness! I feel, even at this distance, that you have floods of tears ready to fall.

Do not be afraid ; let them flow if they must, but let them be seen only by God and those few whom you love. Earthly life is full of sadness ; the more religious and loving the heart is, the more it is subject to an indescribable melancholy, and finds out at every turn that here on earth it is in exile. It can never fully enjoy the object of its love, and it cries in anguish to what is infinite and eternal. You must recognise this once for all, my child, and accept with resignation this incurable wound, which torments our poor hearts as with fire.

Duty and self-perfection must be the star of our life. What does it matter if we suffer in well-doing, if we are drowned in tears, so long as we are growing better ! What matters death, if we love and are alive in God !

Never forget that we have to fight doggedly against all that tends to hinder our growth. Life, dear child, is only given us for growth under God's eye. Keep growing, therefore, and never weary ; for I shall be ever with you, stretching out my hand at the least cry and the merest sign.

Just now begin to disentangle yourself from the world in thought and deed ; look upon it as worthless dust, and ask nothing from it. Keep likewise for God your power of attraction, which is a terrible gift entrusted to you by Him.

I need scarcely advise you to make me acquainted with your whole life, and then regard the future without dismay. Henceforth, nothing ought to have the power to dismay you, for you are now in an *imperturbable* region.

This morning I went up to Notre-Dame de la Garde and prayed for you, imploring God to accept your sacrifice, and to help you to become noble yet

gentle, heroic and truly loving, with a life no more devoted to self, but to the holy cause which I have placed before you.

You must not lose the least bit of your brightness of disposition, my child. On the contrary, you must be full of sunshine, shedding on all sides the light, joy, and peace which are of God.

I sent you the lecture you wished to read, and am surprised that it has not reached you, as I gave clear instructions that it should be addressed to you.

Good-bye, my child. I pray Christ may give you peace, and show you by His light what an important thing this life is! When you understand it as I do, you will set about your sacrifice with calmness, and you will accomplish it with an enthusiasm which has no regrets.

I am with you.

P.S.—Tell Mr. G. that the 'Philosophy of the Creed,' by Père Gratry, is an excellent book to put into the hands of his friend who wants to know and believe in the Faith.

12

Marseilles: Good Friday, April 14, 1876.

My dear Child,—To day is the day of greatest sacrifice, and so appeals especially to all loving hearts, which love even in death—the only fashion of heroic love and worthy of God.

May your strength henceforward, my child, be Christ with His hands and feet pierced, His wounded side, His agonies and cries of woe. Outside of Him there is nought but unending emptiness or deadly corruption. It will be a joy to me to have

taught you this great secret; I shall be proud of it, and you will be happy.

For you also long for the Infinite. This world, with its pettiness and its grossness, its luxury and misery, is not your fatherland. Leave it without giving it a look. I do not want you to be corrupted or to die, but rather to live in the power and life of God. The Spirit will carry you: follow His holy impulses, and rise upward.

There must be no sadness or melancholy. Do not be distressed when, caught up into the regions of light, where silence reigns, you see the earth disappear together with its lusts, and you suffer the sensation of annihilation. Throw yourself upon God, call to me, and rejoice.

I perceive that you are in the way of accord. Restrain by degrees that ardent nature of yours, stifle the volcanoes of earth, and let the stars in heaven give their light. Walk with face uplifted, as you did that glorious evening which you describe so well.

Duty must be placed above all, must be seen to be identical with God. Devote yourself unreservedly to God and to the cause to which I have given you so stern an invitation, for a glorious future lies before you. The greatest mark of the spiritual esteem I have of you is the fact that I believe you capable of appreciating its glory, and enduring its sufferings.

The sky is grey to-day; this day of death is sad; nature may well wear mourning. I love the coincidence of these grey mists which suggest the thought of a shroud. But the forlorn outlook does not rob me of my energy; I keep my feet and fight on still.

Before you leave Provence, my child, I want you to make a last pilgrimage to the shrine and grotto of St. Mary Magdalene. Perhaps I will take you

myself, early in May, as far as the rock, from which I can point out to you the rugged path of your destiny.

I shall be four more days here, and then I shall fly away over mountain and wood, goodness knows where, with my friend Dr. P. You can always write to me at Marseilles, which is much safer than sending letters to various places at short notice.

I am beginning to harvest some fine ears of corn; some who are old in sin are coming in, and I am making up a sheaf. It is glorious to be able to offer to God vanquished souls ready to serve Him with sincerity and sacrifice, won by work in the sweat of one's brow, as a prize of missionary effort.

Take a share in this work; offer yourself up to hasten the triumphant reign of Christ, for which I labour unceasingly.

Forget yourself, forget my *self*. Christ's self only is worthy of unstinted love. All the rest of us are merely atoms swept along together in the mysterious torrent of life.

It will be a good thing for you to learn a little Latin, and when you are in Paris I will tell you how to set about it.

For the present, you can be learning day by day to curb your imagination and your expansive heart.

Put duty before love, for *duty*, as I have often told you, is God — His very will. Duty is the eternal harmony, the triumph of brave and dauntless hearts.

I have read your letter to your mother, and I like it. The better I know you, the more I perceive that you have qualities of *head*. Those who only look at your imagination and demonstrative tenderness see only the outside bark. I have boldly pointed you to the scaling of heaven and endurance of suffering,

because I recognised in you a nature capable always of self-government.

Good-bye, my child; be calm and happy.

I am with you, and shelter you by committing you to God, as to an irresistible wave.

13

Marseilles: April 27, 1876.

My dear Child,—Yesterday I came to the end of my journey over the mountains, whose top I reached in spite of the bad weather. I have been living among the rocks like a shepherd, engaged in admiring nature, in forgetting the frets of earth, and in shaking the dust from my wings while I prayed for those I love.

I have paid another visit to Sainte-Baume. I wandered over all the peaks of its savage rocks, watching the lightning strike in the plain below, and strengthening my spirit by the nearer presence of God.

. . . . . .

Here is the route you must take to get to Sainte-Baume. Leave Cannes on Tuesday morning at seven for Aubagne. Inquire there for a man named Cadet —a carriage proprietor—and drive to Sainte-Baume, having mentioned my name. You will find me there, high up. I am going to Aix to-morrow, where I have to preach on Saturday and Sunday. I shall leave on Monday for Saint-Maximin, and shall be at Sainte-Baume on Tuesday evening. On the Wednesday you will be present when I say Mass; you will communicate, and then I shall leave for Marseilles that evening or the next morning.

Live in the peace which dwells in hearts freely and nobly offered up. Martyrs must not flinch.

Only the victim which joyfully goes to the sacrifice is worthy of honour.

Forget your own self—this is the secret of hero-souls. What does it matter whether people love you? You love God above all, and you are making a glorious sacrifice in order to allow your soul to develop its perfect beauty. Now, do not look back any more; there is nothing greater there. Suppose people turn their backs on you, what of it? A soul like this deserves to be loved, and God's providence orders things in this world in such a manner that we receive all that we are worth. I bless you.

14

Le Touvet: May 16, 1876.

My dear Child,—May the Holy Spirit dwell in your inmost being; may He lead you, teach you, transform and protect you!

I have seen my mother. I have made her happy, and I delight in sending you a line or two from the mother's nest, for I know it will give you pleasure.

How splendid the mountains are; how much I feel that I belong to them! My prayer is that your spirit may dwell in their white inaccessible heights, and that, disdaining the swampy plain where deadly influences are holding you a prisoner, you may dwell where I dwell—in the full light of God.

Seek for calm while you are staying in a place of such kindly solitude, surrounded with lovely scenery, with flowers, birds, verdure, and loving hearts.

You are too easily moved by the emotions of your soul, and the tempests of your heart; you have to learn to regulate the former and govern the latter.

. . . . . .

You have everything to learn, and there is no time to waste. The Holy Spirit is within you, working as burning lava works. He will have a hard task within you, for the peaks which are scarcely showing, and in which you have to dwell in future, must be uplifted. Then you will escape all that triviality which encloses you on every side, which impudently tramples your too hospitable pastures, and of which you must get rid without delay. Turn all those people out of doors! I cannot put up with these buyers and sellers in the temple where God comes.

Arm yourself therefore with Christ's scourge, and strike! You ought to understand what the Spirit requires of you without His telling you. It is better for you, and more fitting for Him, that you should be left to discover it for yourself.

Pray without ceasing; use in your life the guidance you have received; when you suffer, think of the holy cause you have to serve. Keep yourself. I watch your path and am with you.

15

Paris: July 9, 1876.

My dear Child,—I need not tell you that, whether near or far, I continually watch over you. Your soul, your destiny, and your life are very dear to me, and my thoughts never leave the holy work which I am performing in God's name.

So you must take courage. The journey has tired you a little; now keep still and recover your breath. Be careful not to lose the wholesome and religious impressions you gained during your stay in Paris. The more delicate the perfume, the more

easily it evaporates. Keep the flask closed, and concentrate rather than diffuse yourself. Be sure that the delusive appearances of the world are as nothing compared with that which is within you ; therefore live the inward life, dear child, since you have there an unspeakable treasure. Once it was excusable in you to run about haphazard, and to throw open your windows to chat with passers-by ; but now you must do so no more. Your windows have been bricked up, and you have only the heavens above from which to receive light ; so that, whether you will or no, you are obliged to look upward. Do not complain of that.

No ! I feel sure that you will not allow the profane the least approach : their reign is finished for you, and I am desirous that they should not cross your frontiers, for that is holy ground.

I love to read your letters ; there is such a calm on that sea which I have known so tempestuous. Its waves are like those of the gentle Mediterranean whose swell lulled you at Cannes, and in whose crystal mirror the stars came to peep.

Live thus peacefully at your mother's side. When you fly from the nest you should leave such a rich perfume with her as will make her happy, aye, and keep her warm when she feels the chill of your long exile.

Do not be lazy. Rise from your bed as soon as it is morning, unless you are really tired, and do not lie down except for good reason. Brave souls keep the body on its legs, and only let it lie down to regain its strength ; that done, the body jumps up as though moved by an invisible spring. As a matter of fact the spring is invisible : it is the masterful, controlling will of a soul drawn after God, and whose consuming

desire is to grow ever stronger by means of effort, work, and sacrifice.

I am pleased to see, my child, that you diffuse yourself less, and that you are learning to live in your own soul, drawn into that centre where God speaks to you, and in which He has granted me to effect the enormous change which has struck your mother. When a person has climbed a certain height and has seen from that elevation the glory of celestial horizons, he has no desire to run into the plain, to crawl and dabble in the mud and to die there. The higher you ascend the mountain, the more you will love it, and the better you will understand what I am trying to say.

I am relying on a visit from M. Lebeurier, according to your promise, and am looking forward to it. All I know of him gives evidence of a noble soul, and I vow I would go a hundred leagues on my knees to meet with such, so rare are they becoming.

My studies continue to absorb a great deal of my life. I dwell in altitudes suffused by the glorious light of God, and there I feast on joys unspeakable, which I pray God to grant you to share.

I bless you in the fulness of affection with which Christ inspires me, and wish you may be always strong —even heroic if need be.

16

Paris : August 4, 1876.

My dear Child,—I believe in the holy influence which the dead and the saints exercise mysteriously over us. I live in profound communion with these invisible beings, and realise with utmost delight the joys of their secret presence. Centuries may pass,

but they do not prevent souls of the same nature visiting and loving one another. These reflections arise suitably on St. Dominic's Day, and I send them with the prayer that he who is my Father may be with you, to transform you and give you that true beauty of brow and eye which is the reflection of God Himself.

For the moment, dear child, your sacred duty is to devote yourself affectionately to your mother, and this you will do. I want to see the feeling of duty taking the uppermost place in you and becoming the soul of your life, as it were. No more caprices, no more frivolity, no more egoism, and no more of that useless circling about.

I see, moreover, that you are acting well towards your mother, and that you are learning to govern your heart and its impulses, which are always far too hasty. My child, you are able to do all that you have a mind to do. You have both adaptability and energy ; therefore you are much to blame when you let yourself go in the direction of what is least noble and religious in your character.

Never give up striving to *forget yourself*; never think of self, but of goodness and God ; and be on your guard against your extreme sensibility.

The periods of exaltation which you mention may be delightful, and they even indicate the force of the motive power which is drawing you upward. But they are not worth so much as the smallest act of unselfishness, or the least sacrifice made for righteousness' sake in the name of God. Better a tear shed for the sorrows of others, or for our own troubles, than all the ecstasies of an accentuated sensibility.

It is only when a man forgets himself in the service of truth and love, and sacrifices himself to duty,

that he is great, and noble, and worthy of God. Outside that I can only see egoism, that everlasting odious *me* who prefers himself to everything, who seeks his own welfare and admires himself, but whom it is necessary at all costs to merge into God. I hope you will give me the joy of seeing you become more and more forgetful of self, never availing yourself of what charm and advantages Providence has bestowed on you. What has been given us was not given for our glory, but for the glory of God and truth. Besides, you are not your own; you belong wholly to the sacred cause you are about to serve, and in which I set you at work, in God's name, to be an unflinching workwoman.

Since you appreciate the power of memory, ask your heart to repeat to you all that I taught you in our conversations at Paris. What the heart keeps is well kept; what is entrusted to it does not die; you have but to ask and it will display all its buried treasures.

Take great care of yourself, and make for repose, for calm and full tranquillity. Retire quietly into yourself, and may the Spirit envelop and flood you like a peaceful ocean cradling you in its depths.

As for me, I am well. I work hard in spite of the tropical heat we have to put up with, and I silently prepare the weapons with which I shall fight the enemies of God. Light is the great passion of my life, and my love of it is boundless. Pray to God that He will flood me with light, and that in the strength of its radiance I may serve Him, and make Him known and loved among men.

Good-bye. Yours in religion.

17

Paris: October 13, 1876.

My Child,—Take as your motto henceforth St. Paul's splendid phrase, *Quotidie morior*. It is mine also, and I feel, more than I can tell, what heroism and sorrow this phrase contains. But one must hearken to it all the same, and carve it more deeply into one's life than into marble.

Forget self, then, altogether and devote yourself wholly to preparing for the difficult work of a woman-missionary which is before you.

While you complete your intellectual education, you must also work hard at the transformation of your soul. Indeed, you will exercise your moral influence, later on, less through your worldly attainments than by the actions of a heart transformed into the image of Christ. I expect much of you, and feel sure that my hope will not be in vain. Let go all the cares which besiege you and keep you painfully absorbed in yourself. Come out of self, for it is time, and the work is urgent. This sacred work demands not lukewarm, selfish, slack souls, but hearts more finely tempered than steel, wills purer and harder than the diamond. . . .

To-morrow I begin my Advent; I am going to preach on the sanctification of the human soul by Christianity. You will pray for me, will you not? A terrible fight against God is going on, and brave soldiers are needed to meet it. I intend to be one of these heroes.

Good-bye; my blessing be with you.

18

Paris : December 20, 1876.

My Child,—I have had a wretched week with a severe attack of influenza, from which I have scarcely yet recovered. It required an almost superhuman effort to preach my Advent sermons, but I did it. God aided me, and in spite of the weakness of my hoarse voice, I think I drove some of those truths of religion which I love so passionately into more than one soul. I have been dealing with the moral question. I have been proving to society, which is either absorbed in pleasure or tossed in a whirlpool of business, that its soul is dead, and that now is the time to restore it to life. It is fearful to see the moral paralysis, anæmia, and atrophy of this generation. Yet I do not despair of it. Something deep within me tells me that the Spirit of God will breathe again on these corpses, and will make them rise up alive and valiant as an army.

Be preparing yourself, my child, to become one of the chosen instruments in this work of resurrection. Prepare yourself to be able to give us mothers with hearts of diamond, women mindful of the higher duties which are being forgotten, and the neglect of which is killing us. Thinking of these things will give your life a more serious tone ; in opening up wider prospects it will enlarge your heart ; it will give you more space, and stamp you with a higher significance.

Enlarge yourself then, dear child, in the joy and the love of God, and may noble sacrifices never appear to you too burdensome.

I want you to have a large share in this work of moral resurrection, which is being undertaken in our times and in our country by all who believe in the

triumph of God, and the amelioration of our precious human nature.

My life is given unceasingly to this sacred toil. Pray, my child, that God may accept my efforts and bless them.

Good-bye; I bless you. Live happy in work and self-forgetfulness.

19

Paris: February 11, 1877.

My dear Child,—You are in the great path; try to keep steadily there and to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Tear yourself away from self—that is the work of the strong. The really great hearts are those who have learned to forget self. So long as one is occupied with self, one is petty, and unworthy of Christ Who humbled Himself even unto death to prove how much He loved us. I expect this heroic unselfishness from you. The hour is come when the true disciples of the Master have to show themselves. . . . You must steep yourself in the spirit of the Gospel. Read the Sermon on the Mount in St. Matthew; think over every word of it, and conform your life to these precepts which contain the Christian ideal.

You will notice in it our Lord's constant use of the expression 'heavenly Father.' In relation to us, God is not only the Creator, the Master, the Invisible, and the Terrible. He is the Father. We live in His sight and walk in His presence; we imitate Him at a great distance, and we pray to Him in the language of sons, 'Our Father!' This idea lies at the root of Christianity and imparts an infinite sweetness to its austere morality. You will notice further, at the

beginning of the sermon, what is the price of that happiness which is the basis of our hopes, and the unending aspiration of every free and intelligent creature.

We must be detached from everything and become gentle, that is, self-possessed. We have to weep, to hunger and thirst after righteousness. We must be good, pure, peace-loving—in a word, my child, we must forget ourself in our sacrifice to righteousness.

I would that this Gospel might become the living law of your heart, that the work of the Spirit might be perceived in you, transforming your impetuous nature and turning all your energy to the work of evangelisation in which we are both engaged.

So, no more hesitation, no more looking back; the hour is come; Christ calls for workmen and workwomen. Oh! I would I were a legion in myself, to increase my strength and courage a hundredfold, that I might revive in this world the reign of God which seems to be decaying and dying. Help me, my child, and remember that there is nothing more worthy of your holy ambition than this fellowship to which Christ invites us.

Lent is approaching, and in a week I shall have begun what I call my great battle. It is my dream, my will, my resolve, to pour into opening souls some words from God. Such words alone are of saving efficacy, but they are not to be found in oneself; they must come straight from God; and one must be fitted to receive them from Him.

Work hard for your examination, and pass it brilliantly. Nowadays we have need of knowledge.

Goodness, though it supplements all else, is not enough in itself now. In order to conquer, the faithful need at once energy to be brave, self-sacrifice to be noble, and light to be far-seeing.

What happiness it is, my child, to feel oneself numbered in the glorious legion of those who are working and fighting to save men, to make them better, and to restore to them the God Whom they ignore and repudiate; yet, without Whom, they can possess neither beauty, light, nor happiness.

When I reflect upon my apostolic calling, I experience emotions of fear mingled with holy exaltation; and my nature, which craves for independence, looks forth triumphantly over this world, in the dust of which creep the petty ambitions of human nature.

Live, then, in joy and confidence, leaving the future to Providence. Rest in the arms of God as a child, with no other desire than to forget yourself in Him Who watches over us, loves us, and keeps us for Himself.

Good-bye, my child. I will sum up your life as I would wish it—and, I think, God also—in three words, which are an old device slightly altered: *Ora, lætare, labora.* Pray, rejoice, suffer and work.

The second word seems odd; if you find it puzzling, you must ask the Infinite Love for the explanation. I bless you.

20

Paris: May 13, 1877.

My dear Child,—Work without ceasing and do not get discouraged, for the work on which we are engaged is heroic. I fancy you are occasionally downhearted; is it so?

Rise up, and show me that I was right in my estimation of how much that is great and noble your religious and loving soul contains.

Look ever upwards towards Christ, to the Infinite,

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and never downwards to things material, never backwards to those shores you have for ever quitted.

Your task must be to prepare yourself to mould intelligent and strong women, like those early Christians whom Jerome instructed in the most sublime mysteries of God; or like those mothers of the times of persecution, whose offspring were full of courage, ready to die or live.

Never lose sight of this work; for it will be the crown of your active life, and thereby you will perform in spirit the great maternal office, by which the women of to-day can save the world, and help the militant missioners.

I am hard at work. Just after Lent I was unwell for two or three days, but that has passed. It was only the slackening of the well-strung bow. Now I am in perfect health, and engaged in correcting for the press seven philosophical lectures, which I intend publishing in book form in November. This examination in detail of every sentence, indeed of almost every word, is a work of patience which does not fail to exercise that quality in me. It will take me three months. However, in doing it I feel I am obeying the Holy Spirit, and therefore I do it joyfully.

How is it, dear child, that you could not understand that terrible sentence pronounced by Christ to the Pharisees?—*Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* Read the whole of the context in St. Matthew, and notice especially verse 24. There you will find the actual blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which caused Jesus to pronounce those awful words, *hath never forgiveness.*

The Pharisees call God evil; instead of ascribing Christ's deeds of love, which He performed openly, to God dwelling in Him, they ascribe them to Beelzebub. Thus they render a most deadly insult to Love, or the Holy Spirit.

Now, you know, my child, that when one insults Love, it is all over. Love vanishes, and instead come hell and damnation. When Love has not been wounded to the death, appeal can still be made to His mercy and inexhaustible loving-kindness; but after blasphemy there remains nothing. An abyss has been opened; the soul is definitely abandoned. It is the second death; utter annihilation would be less fearful.

Accept this little lesson in Holy Scripture, and when you do not understand the mysteries of the Gospel, ask of me the little light I have. I shall rejoice in seeing my heaven-sent light become your life also.

I have not been to X. for a fortnight. When I was there I saw Sister C., who is gradually settling down in her new place. I expect she has left some of her roots at N. Being transplanted gave her exquisite pain; but what matters sorrow? We ought not to have roots in the earth at all; we are trees planted upside down with our roots in heaven and in God.

Preserve your mental impression of me, but be sure that it is the true one. Be brave, kind, and obedient. Forget self, and pray for him who opened for you the way of true life, and who wishes you to be wholly given to God.

21

Paris : May 23, 1877.

My Child,—I am more to be pitied than congratulated. I have sacrificed much in accepting the Priory of Paris, but I have yielded to the persuasions of my friends, and I am convinced that I am performing a glorious duty and serving a great cause. It is for you, my child, to pray more earnestly for me that God may grant me strength to continue my beloved studies, and to manage the affairs of the convent.

He who sacrifices himself has the right to ask God for everything. . . . The Fathers received me very heartily. May they never have cause to regret having chosen me.

Thanks to our admirable Dominican system, the Priors do not long hold their office. After three years their task is done, and they can efface themselves, and return with new joy to their quiet life of study and contemplation.

Learn self-conquest and self-forgetfulness. He who is no longer his own is the greatest of all. I can only smile pityingly at those men who are so selfish as to think of nothing but their own petty interests, and their own meagre glory. Let us be nobler, thinking of nothing but conquering ourselves, while we work for the triumph of the cause of God.

I bless you ; I wish you to be simple-hearted and open ; eager and devoted, gentle yet energetic, dead to yourself, but alive unto God, unto that Christ Who is my divine passion.

22

Paris: July 16, 1877.

My Child,—The flowers of self-sacrifice are the most scented and the sweetest of all. You gave me a bouquet of them on St. Henry's Day: it filled me with joy, and I blessed God, Who loves you and is transforming you. Go on, my child. Don't put out the furnace which is consuming you, but feed the flames, so that God may be glorified by this sacred fire. I write this brief note in all the bustle of departure. I am going to see my mother, and after spending three days with her at Le Touvet, I am to meet the Priors of the province at Flavigny, where they are called together to consider important matters.

I shall write to you from Le Touvet, from the foot of those mountains which always rouse in me the same enthusiasm as they did when I was eighteen. Alas! this time they will seem clad in black, for my mother is hopelessly ill; and I must be prepared for the worst. How long will she be spared to me? God alone knows.

Pray for me and her, my child.

Your health does not alarm me. With you it is not a question of the body cherishing the soul, but the soul consuming the body, and yet making it live by consuming it.

Let yourself be *slowly* consumed away. Be the lamp in the temple of God. Burn the pure oil that Providence has given you, renewing your store until that day when the breath of God shall extinguish you in order that you may shine elsewhere. Become gentle, kind, and calm. I know a great secret of gaining calmness and kindness: it is to look at all things from God's point of view. Then you will see, my child,

how they will change before your eyes; how the lowering cloud will lose its awfulness, and the thunder storm it bears will come down as the gentle dew.

So far, God has lightened my burden as Prior, and has allowed me to see the souls I rule grow in grace. How sweet it is to make others happy!

I bless you.

23

Le Touvet: July 20, [1877.]

My Child,—I am writing to you from my mountains and the mother nest.

When I undertook this journey I was very anxious, for I feared to find my mother alarmingly ill. I am thankful to say that she is not suffering from cancer, as was feared, but from a tumour, which does not seem to be malignant, and which will not make her old age one long martyrdom. My mother has suffered enough in her life, from death's bereavements, for God to spare her in her declining years, and to let her fall asleep in peace, with her eyes fixed on that eternal shore which has received all her dear ones, and where she would fain join them. Hers is a fearless nature, and she brought up her children in the faith, and in strength of character. I bless God that, for my mother, He gave me one with such a loving heart and vigorous mind. There is nothing weak or undecided about her character: it is as clearly defined as the bold lines of those steep cliffs at whose foot I am writing to you.

. . . . . .

It is most important, my child, that you should learn to forget yourself; it is the only and the last step to perfection. In your intercourse with those around you, never think of the individual but look

simply at the office. When you are brought into contact with Mother Superior So-and-so, or Sister So-and-so, or such and such a companion, see only *the Mother Superior*, *the Sister*, or *companion*, and behave to each as duty demands and God requires.

This does not mean that you should not feel more liking for one person than for another; but these feelings must be carefully shut up in the innermost part of your soul, and must never influence your conduct. If you are faithful to this general principle, you will be a great soul. It is a distinction which a woman's mind, and still more her heart, finds it difficult to make. A woman *personalises* everything; she does not see the Superior, but Mother So-and-so. Regard the *abstract*; distinguish between the office, and the individual who is performing it. The individual may be imperfect, bad, or vulgar; the office is divine. Faith, and the Holy Spirit, can accomplish what it is difficult, or even impossible, for nature to do.

I have not yet answered the question you asked me about St. Paul. No, he was not married, and he had no son in the natural sense of the word. Though the Greek version of the New Testament calls Timothy his *true* son, you must understand *true* in a higher sense. Timothy was born spiritually of St. Paul, and from this point of view was more truly his son, and dearer to him, than if he had been born of his flesh.

May you also become my true daughter by accepting, in His fulness, the Spirit which God has given me, and which I yield to you without stint.

I am not staying here long. I shall start off again on Saturday morning for Flavigny, where, on the 22nd, a congregation of Priors is to be held. I shall

have given my mother a gleam of joy, and have had the comfort of seeing her in less pain, so shall go away happy. We should find our joy in God and in duty, my child. All else is nothing, all else is transitory, all else is unworthy of us and degrading.

Good-bye; my mountains are veiled in mist: the sky is grey; clouds lie on the forest, and rain is falling along the cliffs. What matters it? There is a sun which is never veiled, and a deep peace which nothing created can trouble.

I bless you, my child, in the sweetness and strength of the Holy Spirit. Be happy.

24

Saint-Brieuc: August 27, 1877.

My Child,—I have a week more at Saint-Brieuc, where I am finishing my work in isolation and in the midst of a profound solitude.

Listen to me. I want to point out to you briefly some moral truths, on which I wish you to meditate during your retreat. If the beams of divine light shine into you, your transformation will be complete, for even a single ray is enough to reduce a soul. You know that you have only to focus the sunshine on a diamond, by means of a lens, for the beautiful stone to melt, and pass away in vapour. It has become nothing more than ethereal essence.

The first evening of your retreat, you will purify your secret intention, saying to Christ: 'I desire to do Thy work; I desire to participate with Thee in the salvation of the world, by moulding strong Christian characters in women.' Then you will devote the first day to meditation upon the vanity of earthly beauty and human love. That is it, my child, which

might tempt your woman's heart and ambition. Weigh these two perishable things in the balance of eternity, and you will see how light they are. Twenty years, at the outside, is the limit of the most lasting beauty; and what, I ask, is human love when put face to face with death?

The second day, you will regard the greatness and splendour of your destiny as a woman consecrated to Christ, and called to take part in the regeneration of French, Christian society. All your legitimate ambition, all that is noble in your soul, will find free course in this calling. Thank God for choosing you for so great a work.

The third day, you will dwell upon the important point, that you will be able to fulfil your vocation in proportion as you have acquired its necessary qualification of virtue. Without virtue, one can be neither workman nor workwoman for Christ; and as virtue is, in other words, the performance of duty, and duty is but the will of Christ, meditate all day on the necessity and the cultivation of duty.

The fourth day, you will reflect upon obedience. In the religious life, duty takes the definite form of the rule under which we live; authority is represented by our superiors. Religious obedience, my child, consists in obeying the rule as being the most perfect expression of the Divine will; and in obeying our superiors, not as *persons* more or less sympathetic to us, but as holding an *office* wherein they represent Jesus Christ. Never forget this. Only be faithful, and you will find, in holy submission, inflexible power and absolute freedom.

The fifth day devote to meditation on humility. I will give you the true root-idea of it. It is a virtue which teaches us to see ourselves as we are in the

eyes of God, and *which causes us to regard ourselves from the side of our defects, and others from the side of their good qualities.*

We have a natural tendency to do just the contrary. We look at ourselves, alas! on the bright side, and at others on the dark: this is false and bad. Humility, in doing the reverse, acts according to truth and goodness. Do this always.

The sixth day, my child, shall be given up to meditating upon *forgetfulness of self.* Humble souls forget themselves quite naturally. They are conscious of their worthlessness and poverty, and are disgusted with themselves. Then, they forget all about themselves, and think instead of the holy work which they have undertaken and of the souls of others, whose virtues they perceive rather than their faults.

When you are humble you will judge others less, and consequently you will be kinder. You will not fix your eyes exclusively on the defective side of men and things, and so you will be more just.

On the seventh day, meditate upon community life and the duties it entails. You will find it easy if you possess humility and self-forgetfulness, and you will do a great deal of good wherever you may happen to be. But if, on the contrary, you are neither humble nor forgetful of your own personality, you will become insupportable, and community life will be torture to you. I need say no more, my child; you can pursue for yourself this line of thought which touches questions of practical life.

On the eighth day, consider the Dominican spirit which sums up, as it were, all personal virtues, and is the soul of religion. It is contained in one word, *Truth,* which may be divided into three bright rays.

Truth in doctrine. Have a soul full of faith, and, further, of intelligent faith.

Truth in the expression and manifestation of doctrine. Let your soul be of generous breadth and truly apostolic.

Truth in the life. Let all your actions be consistent with the divine doctrine which you believe and teach; and since the whole of this doctrine lies in Christ crucified and dead for us, be as one sacrificed, a penitent, after the example of your Master.

On the ninth day, you will meditate on prayer and the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, for that will be your help and consolation in life. Pray continually, and communicate as often as you can. Thus you will be invincible. You will surmount every trial, joyfully welcome every sacrifice, realise every perfection. Do not prayer and Holy Communion merge us both together in God and Christ? . . . My blessing be with you.

25

Paris: October 13, 1877.

My Child,—You cannot imagine the joy I feel, in being able to say to myself, that *at last* you are beginning to surrender yourself to God. I marvel at the power of the Holy Spirit Who breathes in you, and am assured, by happy experience, that I have not been rating you too highly.

We live in an age which is sceptical and slack, which cannot understand boldness. People are like stiff-jointed old men who, because they cannot move with activity themselves, are quite surprised to see others walk and jump. Let us leave such to their stiffness, while we go on living.

To live—what is it? It is to suffer, to come out of oneself, to love, to travel towards God. Living means stretching oneself on the Cross of Christ, pierced like Him with five wounds; it means transformation of self and surrender to the Holy Spirit.

I was so glad to make the acquaintance of M. Lebeurier. He came to see me on Friday, and we talked for two hours. He is a man of God, a true priest, energetic yet gentle—gentle, that is, in appearance and energetic in reality. He is full of schemes for the welfare of people, being naturally practical and of untiring activity. I have met few priests who have given me such an impression of the priestly character. He should be an instrument of salvation in this restless age, and I look upon him as one of the living germs of the new era which is approaching. His seems to have been the only good influence which you have met, in this earlier portion of your life, during which God has suffered you to consort with beasts, vipers, &c.

If you want to know the *password* in order to become what you ought to be, it is very simple—forget your own self. It is this satanic preoccupation with *self* which separates us from others, for it paralyses the soul's action, rendering it incapable of supreme sacrifices. Tread this self underfoot; open your heart wide; never shirk opportunities of struggle, devotion, and self-denial. Never say, 'I can't'; for the Spirit of God can do everything; and to cast doubt upon His sovereign power is to act as a traitor. Show me, therefore, my child, that you are capable of this absolute forgetfulness of self. Immediately, all your feminine and *Theresian* faults will disappear, and you will find in God that peace unspeakable which your soul needs for its development.

At the time of writing, we are in the midst of a retreat. This convent is hushed in God's peace as the breath from heaven falls upon it, and I, who hear its whisper, see *apostolic breasts* rising in the life-giving atmosphere of the Spirit.

I preach to my monks once a day. It is a Prior's duty to communicate the holy flame to those he governs; to remind them of forgotten duties; to urge them to higher virtues; to give fresh meaning to the great name of Jesus Christ, which ought to rouse the enthusiasm of every monk. If you were amongst us, you might pick up some scraps from the feast, and gather a few drops of the wine, which you would find intoxicating.

In times of tribulation, cry to God and signal to me. The roads are rugged, the precipices are deep; there may be feelings of dizziness on the heights, gusts of wind, peals of thunder, fierce eagles, nights of awful gloom; fear them not! There are also the joys of sunlight, flowers such as are not in the plain, the purest of air, restful nooks; and the stars smile thence like the eyes of God.

Good-bye, my child; my blessing be with you. Pray to God to give me the lofty inspirations which I need.

26

Paris: November 16, 1877.

My Child,—I must begin by giving you news of my mother: she is still fighting against the progress of her terrible disease. It is wonderful to see the Christian fortitude with which she bears the pain. How strong her soul is! How proud I am of being her son! She has faith like the women in the Gospel,

and courage like a Roman matron. She is suffering for me, she says, and she prays God that I may always be equal to my great mission. I have faith in such prayers, and I feel almost invincible supported thus.

Pray, my child, that God may spare my poor mother, and lighten her last days with a beautiful sunset, full of happiness and calm.

Day by day, I follow you in your work of transformation. Be faithful to all the motions of the Spirit, and mount, without ever wearying, into those regions of sacrifice and divine love of which you are just beginning to be conscious. Live in union with me, in the bonds of the same Spirit Who is leading us.

The world is perishing, far from God and in darkness; only those ardent and light-giving souls, whom Jesus Christ will call out from this fallen race, will be able to quicken it. You must be among these elect, called out to the work. Therefore go on bravely, surrendering everything to the heroic impulse which is leading you up to God. Banish from your heart all that is selfish or egoistical; be no more detained by trifles; be the first, wherever there is a sacrifice to be made, a self-denial to be practised, or an impetus to be given.

Be filled with the divine teaching of the Gospel; when you do not understand its beauty, ask light from me; perhaps I may have some rays to spare for you. Read St. Paul, not only his Epistles, but the story of his life, and his sermons in the Acts of the Apostles. He is the bravest of men; he has the vehemence of a torrent; like my mountain waterfalls, his words seem to leap from a height; but when you listen carefully, in the midst of the sublime crash,

you can hear music of such wild harmony as even the genius of Beethoven could never conceive.

You will soon be able to read the sermon I preached at the opening of the chapel in the Faubourg St. Honoré. Apply to your own case what I say of the work of the missionary monks. I am preaching every Sunday at St. Philip's. My subject is morals. Amidst the political strife which is tearing my country to pieces, I try to raise my voice on behalf of those truths without which the world and its peoples will perish.

Pray God, my child, that I may be His witness in Babylon and unto the ends of the earth. Goodbye. I bless you in all the fulness of my religious affection.

27

Paris: December 8, 1877.

My Child,—Your letter gave me much happiness, the more because I have seen at last the first unblemished ray of self-sacrifice. It is only a ray, only the first hint of dawn; but I value the tiny glimmer so much that my whole being rejoices at its appearance. I thank God for all He has done for you. It is the work of His Spirit; let Him lead you, and raise you whither He will. If He is a fire, suffer to be burnt alive and to be consumed. If He is as a wind, spread wings and sail with Him.

Do not mind being judged by others in a manner which appears unjust to you. Their standard is not yours, neither is yours theirs. Rather profit by it. Remarks which are untrue are really of inestimable value, for they exercise our patience; besides, they generally contain a grain of truth. This grain is

a pearl to be picked up, and valued as a divine treasure.

You must assimilate the Dominican spirit, which is a spirit of self-sacrifice, uprightness, bright gaiety and truth; may it envelop and transform you. It will make you brave, cheerful, light-hearted, and capable of heroic actions.

We have some great undertakings before us.

Young girls, as well as boys, are being deplorably brought up: it is most important that they should be handled sensibly, and prepared for the coming struggles of life. The kingdom of God is being violently attacked on all sides; and we expose it to risk unless we surround the fortress with a battalion of real mothers, and a phalanx of men as true as steel.

I like to tell you these things over and over again. You must inscribe them in your heart, that they may be of service to you in this work of training others, to which you are henceforth committed. I rely on you as an intelligent and devoted worker.

But never forget, my child, that you will only exercise a real and beneficial influence over your little flock in proportion to your own actual virtues. Arm yourself, therefore, with infinite love and unchanging gentleness; be clothed with truly evangelical modesty and simplicity. Go straight along your way, without regarding what people may think. Be gentle as a lamb and strong as a lion, without talons though, except to attack evil and to rend your own flesh.

Your heart is growing, and becoming pure; that is well. We can meet one another better on high ground, which is not wrapped in clouds nor darkened by the fogs of earth.

As to those mysterious verses in St. Paul's Epistle,

of which you cannot understand the sense, I will give you the key to it in a few words.

The apostle, himself flesh and blood, is speaking of concupiscence, *i.e.* the force of the passions, that terrible power which dominates fallen man. The Jewish law gave no relief from this bondage; on the contrary, by enumerating the possible ways of sinning, it rather increased it. Who, then, has given us relief? Who has armed us against it? Christ, the law of grace, the law of love, written in our hearts, and creating in redeemed souls an antagonistic power, which triumphantly holds in check the most boisterous passions.

With this explanation, you will understand the Epistle to the Romans; if not, let me know and I will send you further light.

On Thursday, I saw the excellent Abbé Lebeurier at Issy, and we talked of you and marvelled at God's work in your soul. He is a truly living priest, led by the Spirit of Christ.

I am approaching the end of my Advent addresses at St. Philippe-du-Roule. The congregation has kept increasing, and has outgrown the size of the church. I have been giving vigorous proof of the truth of the Gospel. When I say vigorous, I speak with regard to God's action, not mine. I bless you, and am with you as a father with his beloved daughter. March onward, keeping yourself in subjection.

28

Paris: January 25, 1878.

My dear Child,—It is the Festival of the Conversion of St. Paul to-day, and I am sure that you are praying for me with a new heart and soul. What

power he had, this convert on the road to Damascus! I delight in his fiery impetuosity, his overwhelming fervency. I stand in wonder at the marvels wrought by his irresistible mission zeal. What love that brimming heart held for Christ! No human breast swelled with such devouring love as his. I say this, my child, in order that you may submit yourself ever more and more to the Spirit Whose I am, and Who alone has clad me in armour of fire to fight the glorious battles of God.

Read the Gospel with the utmost devotion. I should like this Book to lie open always before you as the divinely perfect portrait of Jesus Christ, our ideal and our God. Do not depict for yourself, as so many mistaken souls do, a rose-water Christ, a Christ of languor, such a caricature as I often see in foolish images and so-called books of devotion. No; there is but one Christ, and it is the Christ of the Gospel Whom we worship and acknowledge to be God. There is nothing like it anywhere. All the radiance of light, all the irresistibility of power, all the pitifulness of charity, all the passion of love, all the calm strength of serenity, all God's beauty capable of expression in human form—all this, my child, is in the Christ of the Gospel.

Learn, then, to gaze upon this portrait. Long years are needed before our little feeble eyes can accustom themselves to its dazzling glory. You have no idea of the close communion which will result between Jesus Christ and yourself by means of the intimate relation into which you will be brought by the Gospel.

But it is absolutely necessary that you should ask me, when there is something you do not understand. If a master is needed even in the most elementary

subjects, how much more in the divine subject of God!

Later on, you too will become a teacher, and I want you to arm all the girls you train with this Book, in which the Eternal Artist has depicted Himself; in which the Saviour has displayed the source of every virtue.

God has blessed Advent to me. I have dedicated the souls of several unbelievers to Him: these are glorious spoils, rendering joy to the missioner and honour to Christ. I am preparing for my Lent work, and am also correcting the proofs of a little book which will appear about the end of April. Pray for me, my child. . . . The Gospel knowledge of Jesus Christ, acting slowly and imperceptibly, will gradually rebuild in you all that has to be changed. This slow process is the sure one; I have little faith in sudden improvement. For perfection is not wrought in the space of a lightning flash: it is the unseen growth of seeds hid in the ground, unknown to all save the eye of God.

Grow then, my child, by virtue of the tender warmth of Christ, but let there be nothing effeminate or delicate in this growth. We must grow like the oaks harassed by storms, and not in the fashion of the willows which hang their long branches to the ground.

Let me hear from you soon, and tell me about God's work in you. I have a strong feeling that you are rising upward, but I want to be assured of it by you. Are you in good health? I feel sure you are. You have found peace, in spite of fightings within; and that inward flame which God is purifying, no longer preys upon the poor machine, but is, on the contrary, its motive power.

Good, kind M. Lebeurier came the other day to

ask me to dinner and stayed several hours. I showed him over my hermit abode, and we talked much about you. Like me, he thanks God for the marvellous change in you, and spoke of it in words which rejoiced my heart.

My mother's health continues much in the same state. Pray, my child, for strength for my poor mother. My blessing be with you.

29

Paris: February 23, 1878.

My Child,—If you walk erect and straight forward, you will have both light and peace. In every human conscience, especially in a woman's, there are little recesses wherein the evil natural leaven is apt to linger. I do not doubt, my dear child, that you will be sufficiently clear-sighted to discover it and brave enough, if need be, to put an end to it. I pray that God may govern all your thoughts and affections; but if the Word of God is to represent to you something tangible and affecting, you must behold the infinite in the human nature of Christ. Let Jesus Christ be the soul of your soul, and let His Spirit carry you forward into the world of eternity whither I am leading you, and where I rejoice to see you.

If Jesus Christ reign in you He will cleanse you entirely. Affections however ardent, full, and strong; thoughts however absorbing and deep; every emotion of your heart—all will be holy and good in His eyes.

Keep to this principle, my child, and walk faithfully in this light. There are certain books of mystical devotion which inculcate the suppression of the affections. This advice in many cases is salutary, for there are affections which are earthly, fleshly,

base, and unfit to live. But in other cases it is wrong and unnecessary, because there are in life lofty affections, feelings of such admirable nobility and power, that we should by no means uproot them, but rather cultivate them. Heart culture consists in establishing a proper order: God first in sovereign majesty, Christ on the only throne. Then created beings may sit on the steps of the invisible throne, ranged one above another, and transfigured in the unearthly light which flows from the Divine presence and eternity.

Once grasp this, my child, and you will possess the secret of ruling yourself, for you are entirely influenced by your heart—that hungering, impetuous, insatiable heart which God has given you, and which sacrifice, so far from deadening, rather stimulates into increased activity. Self-sacrifice is not death, but increase of life. He who gives up his life finds it again immeasurably increased, and he who keeps it loses it. I do not love these 'conservatives,' for they are really dead. I only love the living, and I would give a thousand aromatic mummies lying so quietly in their shrouds, coffined in imperishable cedar, for the tiniest seed which palpitates in the ground. May you be a seed from God sown in ground blood-stained by sacrifice.

I think, my child, that you will find in these words, given me for you by God and the Holy Spirit, food in days of fasting, a ray of light for the sombre Lenten seasons, and an impelling force to carry you to the end of your life's evolution.

I will send you a book which is to come out in the beginning of March. It is a study of Claude Bernard, the great eulogist of science, who died recently. I had a great admiration for his abilities, and an almost filial regard for him personally. The

book is rather scientific, but there are musical strings in it, and you will understand them all, even the least resonant ones.

I shall soon begin my Lent work, which promises to be a great undertaking, This is my plan of campaign. Every Sunday, from four to five o'clock, I shall deliver a lecture at the convent in the Faubourg St. Honoré ; on Wednesdays, from eight to nine in the evening, I shall give another less formal one to picked young men on the subject of the relation of science to religion. Keep these days and hours in your mind, my child, and do not fail on these occasions to pray still more earnestly, and to offer to Christ some hidden suffering.

My mother still remains in the same state, never giving way for an hour to the dreadful disease from which she suffers. Her great Christian soul never wavers ; and as soon as God gives her freedom from pain, she seems to rise with ever-increasing insistence towards heaven and the Cross which procures it. She lives and suffers for me like a courageous Christian. I bless you and thank you for uniting yourself with her.

Ever yours, my child.

30

Easter Eve, 1878.

My Child,—This letter will reach you to-morrow with the first Easter Alleluia. It will bring you joy and calm, the power of God, and an abundance of peace. During Lent you suffered on behalf of my work ; I have felt the benefit of it, and I think God has blessed me more abundantly.

Never be surprised, or discouraged, or cast down by any trial, whatsoever it may be, but march on straight

forward. Nothing must stop you. I repeat it, nothing. What the Spirit of God moves is irresistible. I am sure that the Spirit of God is watching over you, and forging you unceasingly with iron and fire.

Only think of one thing—your duty. Do your duty simply, well-doing being your single aim, and be ready to receive, as your only reward, the bitterest humiliations.

Do not rejoice when you are praised for the duty and work you have performed ; do not be cast down when you are blamed in spite of all the willingness you may have exhibited. Your strength must be in the Spirit of God ; the only grief you may know is the grief of having betrayed Him by lack of trustfulness.

But you will not betray Him, for I know you are capable of any sacrifice, and I pray God that He will not spare you any trial. You will thus most effectively bear your part in regenerating our decadent race, so wanting in noble souls ready to suffer all things.

Do not worry about anything ; bear with unruffled peace all that it may please the Christ to give you as a small part of His heavy cross.

When you sink under its load cry to me, and I will take half of its crushing weight. Do not be disturbed by words or tales brought at random, by expressions more or less unkind, or even by any injustice. Go straight on, I repeat, and bless even those who do not return the love you bestow on them.

Follow in peace the voice of conscience, accepting frankly the advice which comes from above. To the true-hearted everything becomes simple and plain. A simple, great soul, which only asks for opportunities

of self-sacrifice and self-devotion, can unravel any difficulty, however inextricable it may seem. Be such a soul, my child. Let perfect beauty wrap your life round, and let your heart grow large enough to love all who approach you, even as Jesus loved and forgave those who were crucifying Him.

You will do this, my child, and you will be the living proof of my religious work on you. You possess resources that must be developed. Give all to God and to Christ, so often forgotten, but for Whose triumph we are working by the sacrifice of ourselves. Our only value, my child, is in that we have suffered. I have such a high opinion of you that I believe God will not spare you any sacrifice, and I shall never ask relief for you.

My lectures to men have been most successful.

To-day I am gathering the ripe ears, and I am proud of offering to Christ a beautiful golden sheaf. It is all the more beautiful because here and there are stains upon it, as red as blood—ruby blood, the blood of sacrifice.

Good-bye, my child. March on with a free and proud step ; never look back. With all my heart I bless you.

31

Paris : May 28, 1878.

My Child,—I fear you have been uneasy and distressed by my silence ; yet I know what your courage is and how the Spirit, Who is gradually making you free, is able to supply strength for every sacrifice. You need no proof of my entire devotion : you have confidence in one who has never wavered in the task of making you what you are at present, and you are

ready to believe yourself capable of becoming what you will be in a short time.

I have been rather unwell for the last fortnight. At the end of my long campaigns, when the fire of action has died away and I am left to myself, I generally suffer a reaction, a kind of gloom which makes me think of death, yet which serves to prepare me for fresh battles. It is really nothing: or, rather, it is an excellent thing. For it is good to feel that we live in a weary world, because it helps us to desire more ardently the untroubled realm which is filled with the glory of God, and His peace which passes words.

You will not complain any more that I do not mention my health, for I am sending you a regular bulletin.

The day before yesterday I recommenced work, and I have arranged to preach every Sunday in June at my little convent. I intend to speak on the subject of Bible reading which has been in my thoughts for several years, and on which I must deliver my mind. You know my devotion to Christ and more especially to the living portrait which He has left us in the New Testament. Christians nowadays do not look at it, but amuse themselves instead in regarding miserable caricatures which they call Jesus. It seems scarcely possible that people should be led away into such errors, and that the glory of Christ should be thus veiled and darkened. Read the Book itself, my child, unceasingly, and when you are tired of reading shut your eyes and contemplate the Crucified. Take away from Him nothing of what He deigned to be, and also add nothing to the shape which He was pleased to take. Those who add, act with as much impiety as those who take away: the former distort, the latter diminish Him; both are wanting in

reverence. There are familiarities which nothing can excuse—not even love, for the first thought of love is to preserve the object of love inviolate.

Continue, my child, to become transformed to the Christ-like ideal. In this take as example the saints who have succeeded best, as Mary Magdalene, Catherine of Sienna, and Theresa. These noble souls soar in heights which we shall scarce attain ; but we can, at all events, follow them at a distance, and their examples, though beyond our reach, may draw us up above ourselves.

Be a devotee of progress. Never say to yourself, 'It is enough,' but keep rising higher.

You must think especially of this duty on Ascension Day, and ask of Christ, for yourself and for me, strength to grow up continually in the way whither He is leading us, without a single look backward or downward.

I want you also, my child, to form the habit of acting rightly without regard to human opinion. Whether you be praised or blamed, helped or persecuted ; whether you be looked upon kindly or unkindly, judged justly or unjustly ; whether you be credited with good or bad motives, care for nought but goodness, your own conscience, and God.

Treat everything else, not with disdain exactly—for the religious soul will despise no one—but with breadth of view and kindness.

Forgive those who persecute you and misjudge you ; love them all the same, just as you do those who benefit you. So you will be a true daughter of our heavenly Father, and I shall recognise His Spirit in you.

The further I advance in life, the more I marvel at the irresistible power of kindness. It is the chiefest

virtue; all others without it seem like the dead branches of a withered tree. Be kind, my child; kind without stint towards all, even those who are least attractive to you.

The secret of kindness consists, first of all, in forgetfulness of self, which leads on to entire devotion. Those who love make themselves beloved, and such as make themselves beloved are capable of all goodness.

The power of your influence over a soul will be conditioned by the depth of your love, and therefore, in order to save a soul and bring a divine influence to bear upon it, you must have a divine love for it.

Prepare yourself, by work and prayer, to become a real mother to all the children whom God may put in your care. The practice of virtue will give you solidity of character, which will place you above the young passions which take root sometimes in hearts of twelve or fifteen years old—passions which you must be on the watch to extinguish. Be strong, then, and may the Holy Spirit increase in you more and more to preserve you from all weakness. Good-bye, my child, with my best blessing.

32

Paris: June 20, 1878.

My dear Child,—Yield yourself more entirely to the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. There are three spirits by which men may be led: the spirit of earth, which gives us over to the fire of the passions; the spirit of man himself, which fetters us in deadening selfishness; the Spirit of God, Who raises us above things material and our own petty selves, and causes us to live by that eternal life of which Christ

constantly taught, and for which our wonderful soul was created.

Virtue's hard task is to subjugate the spirit of man and of the world to the Spirit of God. By nature we are full of self; we wallow in the clay of which we are kneaded, held there by a crushing weight of shackles. It is only after an heroic effort, my child, that by the grace of God we master ourselves, conquer the material part, and rise to live in the upper regions whither the Spirit of Christ carries us.

Cling to this Spirit as your greatest treasure.

He will make tribulation light, struggle easy, sacrifice attractive. He will teach you how to forget yourself quite joyfully.

In fact our real worth is exactly in proportion as we are possessed of the Spirit. Souls which are yielded to the spirit of earth bury their divine beauty in the earth; and those which remain in bondage to their own spirit are cursed with sterility and impotence. The only great and noble souls which are also serene and powerful are the souls filled with the Divine Spirit. Be one of these, my child, and remember that when I planted you in the regained Garden of Eden, where the step of God is heard in the cool of the evening, I had but one object—that the earthly and human element in you might be subdued, and that God might reign alone.

I am going to see my mother early in July, and my visit will be like a ray of happiness to her. She continues in pain, but her spiritual strength is wonderful: she offers herself up for me while she lives.

I am well, and I preach every Sunday on the Gospels in our little chapel. I bless you with religious affection.

33

Le Touvet: July 2, 1878.

My Child,—I do not reproach God for treating you as He has, but rather would bless Him. Support your trial with courage. Never shrink from sacrifice, and remember that in this world love which is not sacrifice is not love at all.

Look up to Christ and stretch yourself *without a struggle* on the cross whereon He died, and on which you must sacrifice yourself at His side.

You must needs conquer the promised land at the cost of countless sufferings. Do not be dismayed by them; we will meet them together. I am accustomed to the sword and to battle of every description, and besides, my child, is not God always with those who truly love and who accept suffering?

Only those who have thus yielded themselves up are really good. Don't talk to me of all those who enjoy themselves: they are wrapped up in themselves through selfishness from which only pain can set them free. Rise to those heights where the air seems to fail us, but where one has a vision of Christ transfigured.

How I rejoice to see that you do not faint, and that the strokes do not prostrate you, but rather raise you up. Remain gentle and calm in uncomplaining love. Submit to be judged by others as Jesus submitted to death, but do not you judge; love instead. I know of no greater virtue than this; in it all moral beauty consists.

You know that God is with you; then what does all else matter? Tread the sharp paths, cutting your feet among the stones and briars of the way; climb

the mountain, be filled with the Divine Spirit, and remember, my child, that henceforward your duty lies in training the future mothers.

Such are lacking to our country and our race; ours are spiritless and despondent. They do not understand the great ventures and heroic sacrifices which inspire the trusting heart with the love of divine things.

Thank God, my mother does not belong to this degenerate race. You should see the serenity, the courage, the faith, with which this valiant Christian woman suffers. One of my greatest predestinate blessings was to have had such a mother, and I thank God for it every day with a full heart. Her disease gives her scarcely a moment's rest: it is Christ's will that this ardent soul, so ready for any cross, should drink to the dregs the bitter cup of trial. I was hoping that the last years of her life would be spared from suffering. But I was thinking of her with a son's love; God's love has decided otherwise, and I believe in God's love.

As to the verse in the Bible which you ask me to explain, it is easy to understand if you bear in mind that the parable points to Jesus Christ. It is He who is 'the nobleman' who goes away into our little earth as to a far country; it is He who is rejected by the earth-people; He of whom they cry, 'We will not have Him to reign over us.' This cry seems in our days of growing infidelity to increase in volume. Man sets himself above God, and cares nought for Christ Whom he does not know; yet Whom, if he knew Him better, he would surely hail as King.

How peaceful my mountains are! How much I enjoy this divine silence! Paris is so bustling, men

are so noisy. But in the silence one can hear the voice of God. I bless you with all the tenderness of Christ.

34

My dear Child,—Cease to put limits to the fulness of your sacrifices, and show me by your generosity that you understand the divine affection for you which God has given me in order to save you.

You have, dear child, capabilities for sacrifice which you do not realise, but which, thank God, I know. That is why I have never trembled for your affection and your faith, even when the severest trials have swept down like a tempest upon you. Forget self; let us rise above earthly things. It is the only means of subduing that terrible selfishness which keeps us from giving up all to God. Be clad in the noble beauty which belongs to disinterested souls, and show no trace of personal feeling, dear child.

I have been writing rather a long article on the subject of anthropological science, which is to appear in the September number of the 'Revue de France.' I will send it to you as soon as it is out. It is rather technical, but your mind is open to light of all kinds, and you will gain some instruction from the article.

I stand in great need of rest. I want to get out of the hurly-burly of Paris, and breathe the refreshing air which blows over sea-sands. The uproar of the city, in addition to the thousand little worries of the Priorship, makes me long for a little silence and solitude. I shall use it to recollect myself before God. In course of time one loses oneself and becomes quite a stranger; one needs the peace and illumination of God in order to recollect oneself. I

shall pray for you, my child, more earnestly still, if that be possible. I seem to be gradually educating you from a distance in the higher life, and you cannot imagine the joy I feel when I see you improving. When you write next to me it will be to Saint-Brieuc. Profit by your holidays to have a thorough rest. Let your soul rise upward to God, free from worry and bitterness. Be kind to all, my child, as if you had to do with Christ your God. Kindness should be absolute—that is, without any restriction. Kindness which limits itself is tainted with selfishness. Place no limit to yours. And then, when the hour is come, when God so wills, He will cause us to meet again, were it only for a moment. Circumstances are guided, overruled by Him, and they fall out just as He directs. We must give up the helm to Him; it is better in His hands than in ours. My blessing be with you.

35

Villa Ganda: August 26, 1878.

My dear Child,—May God's peace be with you! This I pray with all my heart of Christ Who alone can give it. Do you know whence I am writing to you? From the seaside, where I am living in a little villa which the Fathers of Saint-Brieuc have rented for the holidays. It is in a charming situation: from my window, which is a few yards from the edge of the cliff, I look out on the sands, the curling waves, and a wide horizon where sight is lost and the infinite seems in view. It is an absolute solitude, and we live like hermits: there are two or three of the Fathers with me. They do the cooking in turn; one goes to catch fish, another visits the farmhouses

to buy butter, potatoes, and eggs, while the third stays at home. This life of a savage is delightful. Nothing rests one more after the deafening tumult of Paris. For my part, I work all the morning till one o'clock, and then I go out. I tramp out barefoot on the sands, praying, meditating, conversing with God and with my own thoughts, which sometimes are more uproarious than the stormy sea.

I think, my child, that there is a great resemblance between your nature and the restless sea by which I am living.

Your surface is extremely easily disturbed: the least breath wrinkles it, the least cloud alters its colour, the least sand-bank ruffles it. Only those who do not know the sea well would say that it is very changeable; for that is a mistake. Its mobility is on the surface: in its depth it is ever the same. The most dreadful tempests, which on certain shores hurl up waves a mile long to a prodigious height, do not stir the tranquil ocean at a depth of a hundred fathoms.

It is the same with you. And I know, my child, that in spite of all that God calls you to suffer, in spite of all the storms of which you tell me, in spite of all your rebellion against everything which hinders your activity, in spite of the dulness of a cloudy sky which gives a leaden hue to your soul—in spite of all, I know that at the bottom of your heart, of your spirit, of your nature, there is peace.

There is an important work for you to do. Listen. You have to make a clear distinction between the superficial world of *your feelings*, and the world of *your will*.

Feelings are of very little value; the will is everything. God will not call you to task for the

eelings you may have had, for it is not within the power of man to ward them off or allay them. They are like the rising wind, the gathering cloud, the bursting storm, and the falling snow. That which God looks at in the human soul is *the will.* The only thing that lies within our power, my poor child, is to will, to love. That is what Christ wants of us, that is the important thing: He reckons us only according to the measure of our will and our love.

Some natures are much less impressionable than others: there are some which are in perpetual motion like water, others motionless as rock. The more impressionable a nature is, the greater need has it of what I may call self-division; it must make the divided portion, which contains the feelings, fluid; the other, containing the will, immovable.

To forget oneself—do you know what that means, dear child? The principle of it is not to worry about one's feelings; to say to all of them, as they occur, your favourite phrase, *I don't mind.* I am sad; *I don't mind.* I have been insulted and am angry; *I don't mind.* I am ignored and my pride rebels; *I don't mind.*

I don't mind anything—but I cherish my *will.* I want God; I want good; I want to prove to Christ that in this icy-cold age there are still hearts conquered by His beauty; I want to share in the work of regenerating my country; I want to devote myself to the training of Frenchwomen; I want . . . I want to be quit of what is material, and to enthrone the Spirit; I want to help him, whom God has appointed to be my rescuer, in his great mission work; I want what is divine to rule my life; I want to suffer and to die in order that all these great wants may be blessed by God.

Do you feel, dear child, how splendid this 'I want' is? Put all your strength into that, and give up for ever all your feelings, whatsoever they may be.

With regard to your relations with your mistresses or your pupils, I know only one word to settle them —charity. Charity which sees the good, charity which forgets itself, charity which pardons, charity which possesses the exquisite tact to say or do the right thing—charity, in fact, which disarms the most turbulent and is the last word of wisdom.

Walk, therefore, having this as your password, and fear nothing. Fix your eyes on the glory of your destiny, as the sailors fix theirs on the lighthouse when they foresee a storm and calculate where they can land. We have great need nowadays of self-sacrificed souls to teach the young generation by their very lives. You will be one of these.

We will fight and conquer together, and we shall together share the unspeakable joys of God.

Take good care of yourself. Support me in my severe work, and pray God to grant me His holy inspiration.

I have just finished correcting the proofs of my article on 'Anthropology at the Universal Exhibition' which will appear on September 1. I am going to employ my peaceful hours of solitude in composing a preface to the volume of Lectures which is coming out in October. I intend to handle the question of the conflict between Science and the Faith. Pray for my undertakings, dear child, that God may have mercy on my worthlessness, and may bless my right motive.

I bless you. Yours in religion through Christ.

36

Saint-Brieuc : September 6, 1878.

My happy days of remote, religious solitude are almost at an end, my child, and I send you the last reminiscences of it.

Yesterday evening we left our hermitage on the shore. The shutters are closed, and the house is deserted like a cage from which the birds have flown. We turned our heads to have a last glance at it when we were leaving, and it looked like a house of mourning. We get to love the places where we have worked, rested, and prayed : they possess a sort of mysterious virtue, and when we revisit them we are strangely conscious of its influence. It may be that the good spirits are everywhere present, and that by our good actions we open an abode for them, where they delight to tarry awhile and plume their shining wings.

I have finished my preface to the new volume of Lectures which I am going to publish in October or November. I have written a hundred and twelve pages without a single day's rest, which might have broken the thread of inspiration. I hope that your prayers have been the means of bringing me some heavenly gift.

This morning I offered the great sacrifice to God to your intention. I prayed Christ to teach you more and more perfectly to die and to love. These two words mean the same thing : he who dies not loves not, and he who loves not knows not how to die.

To die, in the divine sense, means to give one's life. Not all who die give their life ; there are some —indeed, the greater number—from whom it has to

be taken. Only those who love can and do give their life.

Grow then, my child, in love and utter sacrifice. Jesus said, 'He who keeps his life loses it, and he who gives it saves it.' Selfish people are hateful. In spite of their flourishing appearance they are not alive, but congealed, petrified, and barren. Never become like that.

That is the reason, my child, that, seeing your capabilities of loving and dying, I desired to commit this treasure to God. My faith has been in Christ Who saves us; I have believed that His grace is richer than our poverty, stronger than our weakness.

This letter will reach you at the close of your retreat, and should strengthen your convictions and resolutions. Do not cease to work continually at that *famous self-division* which I spoke of in my last letter, for that is an important matter. When you have achieved this heroic task, you will be indeed a woman, a mother, and, better still, you will produce to the moral and Christian life the children entrusted to you who are yet unborn; your relations with those around you will be peaceful; you will possess independence, because you will be in subjection to none save your duty and God; you will have peace because you will love all men, perceiving in every soul Christ your master and your friend. Nothing will trouble your tranquillity; for how shall a soul be shaken which pays no heed to its feelings, and whose will is fixed inalterably on God? Live according to these instructions, my child, and take them for the direction of your life.

Now I will explain to you what you asked me. 'It is of faith,' says Mgr. Gaume, 'that there is no unpardonable sin in this world.' Nevertheless, Jesus

said, 'The sin against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.'

Let us understand each other, my child. If you look at a sin as it stands, and then, on the other hand, think of the infinite mercy of God, it is evident that the latter, by virtue of *absolute might*, can overcome sin and bring about repentance and consequent pardon. But if you look at the sin together with the mercy of God, as they exist under the harmonious laws which govern our human condition, you comprehend that the sin against the Holy Spirit has no remission on account of the very reasons I have given you.

Under human conditions, he who repulses love is beyond pardon, for what remains if love be slighted? Just so, what is there capable of subduing the man who has thrust aside the love of God, who has turned his back on the most precious things God could offer?

As to the man out of whom the evil spirit was driven, and whom Jesus likens to a house swept and clean, it is obvious that he could not be possessed again by the evil spirit, *reinforced* by seven others, against his will. If we take the passage in a symbolical sense, it goes to prove that a relapse into sin casts the soul into a state worse than that prior to conversion. But if we take the passage merely as the recital of the fact of possession—which might be an affliction resulting from no fault of the person so possessed—then there is no reason why a man possessed by an evil spirit should not, after a certain interval, become the prey of other spirits more violent and more wicked.

Do you understand, my dear disciple? Do not fail to ask me for any information you may need.

As to charades, I confess I am the dullest person in the world. However, I guessed X.; but evidently it was my heart and not my head that guessed. As to the ruminant animal, I myself have ruminated quite fruitlessly, and, as I cannot make out what the mammal is, I give it up.

I would rather guess the meaning of the sound of the waves, and try to understand the song of the evening breeze over the cliffs. I would rather divine the voice of the infinite as it thunders or murmurs in the recesses of every living conscience.

Good-bye, my child; I bless you with a father's love, and am yours in Christ.

37

Lodève: October 2, 1878.

My dear Child,—I am writing to you from the depths of the country, where I am come to sow the good seed. I am much inclined to set out for Rome, to defend myself against the spiteful or foolish accusations which are continually being made by certain fanatical persons. But the Master-General has been so kind in assuring me of his devotion to my interests, that for the present I have given up the idea. If it become necessary, later on I shall not hesitate to go. Under certain circumstances one must defend oneself, and I am certain to receive the most paternal reception at the hands of the Holy Father. Do not allow all this to trouble you, however; those who desire to do right, my child, are doomed to every kind of strife. They must always be in readiness, lance in rest, sword in hand, seeking only the opportunity to devote themselves, to suffer and to conquer for Christ.

Did you get my article on anthropology? Have you read it and understood it? Did you like it? Say a few words about it in your next letter. The problems touched upon in the article are indeed serious, but it is not for you to keep aloof from the progress of truth. On the contrary, you are to follow its bright evolution and to share in it at least by means of your prayers and virtues.

I am returning to Paris to-morrow, just before the Festival of the Rosary. Our great undertakings are about to begin again, and I confess that I feel an indescribable emotion when I think of the fresh campaigns which await me. Help me to the utmost.

On November 1, I shall commence a series of Advent sermons at St. Philippe-du-Roule on the subject of the Law. It is a theme of lofty morality, wherein it is easy to show the superiority and the grandeur of Christianity. Moral truths need to be recalled to a generation made slack by ease, and belittled by earthly preoccupations; and of all moral truths in need of recapitulation, there is none of greater importance, in my opinion, than the Moral and the Divine law.

Let us work together in spirit, my child. The co-operation of souls inspired by the same faith and the same charity, is the condition of all faithful work.

Have you had pleasant holidays? Are you still under the happy influence of your retreat? Father J. was helpful to you I know and can feel. His is a soul filled with the charity of Christ, exquisitely tender, and capable of understanding your nature.

Now, my child, recollect that by sacrifice we learn to live the higher life.

The heart which tears itself from created beings finds them again in God, transfigured and made divine. Never forget this, and may this thought sustain you in moments when it is necessary to sacrifice what is earthly, and to take shelter in the Spirit.

And, again, forget self. When an opportunity arises of giving someone pleasure, even at the cost of suffering to yourself, do not hesitate for a moment to perform the service. It is such happiness to forget self, never even to think of self, to share in the breadth of God's love. In that consists the noble life ; thence arises the resplendent beauty of soul. Gain for yourself this bright halo.

My book entitled 'Science without God' will appear at the end of the month ; I have finished the preface, which I have had so long in my mind, and now I am correcting the first proofs.

No doubt you will read it and receive instruction from it, and you will impart to your girls later on the truths you have gathered from it, in order to confirm them in the faith.

It is no easy task, my child, nowadays to defend the truth. Thick mists gather around it, and often it is necessary to climb painfully to the summit in order to rise above the black fog which hides the sky, and which stifles even the most robust intelligence.

Pray to God often that this deadly mist be dispersed, and that the kingdom of truth come. Putting self aside, think of the souls that have succumbed, who no longer see the stars of God, but lie buried in the night of utter error. It is to such souls that I am sent ; for them it is meet to suffer, pray, and love.

Good-bye. I bless you. I live ever with your soul, which I do not cease to commend to the victorious Christ Who possesses and will keep it.

Yours in religion.

38

Paris : October 13, 1878.

You are expecting I shall send you a flower or two for your name's-day on the Festival of St. Theresa, and here it is. Do not ever trouble about me, for you know that in my silence, as well as in my words, I labour in God's sight to support you and to render you worthy of Him.

The work of holiness is being accomplished in you slowly but surely, by dint of sacrifice and trial. Do not grow weary : we are climbing steep mountains, so what wonder if now and then we lose breath ? But here and there, like the prophet, we come upon little hospitable shrubs on the bare side of the steep mountain, under whose shade we may lie down to sleep ; and when we awake, the angel of God is there to give us the bread and the living water. With this we can reach the topmost pinnacle of Horeb.

Use your gifts for the spread of Christ's kingdom. Now here is a great secret in the education and training of souls, young as well as more advanced : *you will never succeed in inspiring in others that which you have not yourself.* Therefore, my child, if you do not possess such and such a virtue, do not attempt to inculcate it, even with the most ardent and convincing words. Virtue alone produces virtue. This will show you the absolute necessity of holiness, in order that you may fulfil your vocation of woman-missioner. Alas ! no human soul possesses all the virtues ; in

Christ alone that ideal finds expression. All we can hope for is to reflect some rays of the Eternal Sun, and it is these we must transmit on all around.

Remember this, and may this, the supreme law of education, stimulate you to advance towards perfection.

I want you, my child, to attain entire self-forgetfulness, and to have as your sole aim *to give pleasure to all mankind, as far as conscience allows.* Does that sound simple? It is heroic, sublime. Aim at that; I will help you. Notice that I say to *all mankind—all.* The word denotes infinity. Charity excludes none: it is commensurate with God. The heart which opens to admit it never ceases to grow. There is nothing more beautiful than those beings whom the Spirit of Christ has graced with perfect love, whose hearts beat with a full, unchecked rhythm imparted directly by God. Such you will be, I feel sure; and you will never refuse to increase in sacrifice and in forgetfulness of Theresa.

Now, so far as I am concerned, have no fear. I belong to God, to Christ, to the Church; I march through the midst of my enemies, calm and steadfast, having the support of my conscience and possessing a simple aim—the reign of God.

I went to Montmartre to say the Holy Mass, and there were many who inquired after you. I gave them good news, excellent news. Was I right?

I have found it impossible to go and see L. My work has been very pressing, and in a few days I am going to place my convent in retreat and deliver addresses myself to my monks. This will be from the 20th to the 30th. Pray for us to the utmost of your soul.

I am in good health. I recommence my lectures

on November 1, and intend to preach on 'The Law.' It is an important subject, fitted to arouse, enlighten, and establish men's consciences, and to throw into more attractive relief the sovereign law of man and the universe—the Gospel.

Pray God to enlighten me, and do not forget that the most glorious light rises behind the blood-red clouds of sacrifice.

Good-bye, my child, Theresa the transformed. I bless you with a father's affection.

39

Paris: October 28, 1878.

My Child,—Yes; we will say the noble prayer you wish together, day by day.

It is so Dominican, so much in conformity with the Spirit from on high Which draws us to Christ, that we may be indeed united in Him. The rosary is the Gospel of the simple, and in repeating it we find the image of Him Whom we both adore.

This is all I am writing to you to-day, with the addition that I am happy to know that you are better.

May you be, in the love of the Master, a source of power and serene happiness in my mission! I bless you with all my heart.

40

Paris: November 13, 1878.

My Child,—It is fifteen years ago to-day that my poor, beloved sister died in my arms. I had the sad satisfaction of closing her eyes. Her last thought was for God and her brother. I often ask her, my child, that her soul may dwell in yours. I have never known

any so transparent, so luminous, so simple, and so kind. There was not the least drop of bitterness in her.

. . . . . .

Only once, after seeing the Dominicans, who had settled near the convent where she lived, my poor sister was struck by the bright frankness which is the characteristic of our great Order, and on her return she said somewhat sadly to me, 'What a pity I have never known Dominicans!'

That is a bright memory which nothing on earth can dull. She loved me with holy devotion. I can see her still, raising herself up at my last approach to her death-bed, as if love for her brother had given her fresh life.

I long that this soul may aid you from on high as she aids me, and that she may embrace you with tenderness unearthly.

I have some instructions and rules of conduct for you with regard to children. Since your vocation brings you into contact with these delicate beings, it is important that your conscience should be enlightened, and your judgment forewarned.

Of course I need not say, my child, that you cannot be responsible for the feelings and the mingled emotions which have play in these little ones, when you have done nothing to bring about the development of germs which sometimes the least thing stimulates into growth.

Before all, be sure you have a right intention deeply implanted in your heart. It should be your firm resolve to cultivate for God these frail souls, in which there is already strife between good and evil. That they may be cultivated aright, there is need of perfect tact, nobility of soul which never varies, and a

mother's devotion. Avoid all outward and visible demonstrations of your tenderness. The Dominican spirit is frank, free, gay, loving, but austere. Our tender feelings are within, and they may rise to heaven direct, without receiving visible expression.

Always keep this in mind; for in acting thus you will do your part in moulding souls strong yet not stubborn, and hearts affectionate without sentimentality.

Tender feelings which are restrained, are as much superior to those poured forth, as is tempered steel to iron. This smiling self-mastery will, of itself, communicate to the children an early strength of character which produces noble souls. Remember, my child, that these little beings are like photographic plates of infinite sensibility, on which the least ray of light fastens, and which a mere nothing spoils. We grown-up people have the *hides* of elephants, and so we do not feel with any keenness; but they, the white-robed little ones, are without this skin, and feel every breath of wind.

And then, my child, you must add to your devotion as mother, the supernatural *industry* which the Spirit of God will teach you.

Your prayers, your acts of sacrifice, your unseen sufferings, are all holy forces to be employed in moulding the young characters of children. In proportion as goodness grows strong in you, will it diffuse itself from you like a divine perfume and penetrate into the children's souls.

I recollect that, when I was about eighteen, I met Father Lacordaire for the first time. Some spirit of virtue seemed to wrap me round, and in his presence I felt I had become better. A soul filled to overflowing with God is like a furnace glowing with heat

and flame. All who approach it become conscious of dazzling brightness and cheering warmth.

These precepts, my child, can be considered the *transcendental* code of education. The Holy Spirit will give you understanding of it, and your heart is so open to receive what Christ bids me tell you that you will not fail to grasp it.

Do not suppose, however, that children of all temperaments will obey you. Occasionally you will meet some who are refractory to your influence; towards such you must show yourself stern, especially when the seeds of future evil are manifest. Yet, if otherwise, study to be kind even to the tiresome children, proving to them by your kindness that, sooner or later, good always overcomes evil.

In a few days you will receive my last book, 'Science without God,' which is about to appear. It is a collection of lectures, rather scientific perhaps, and introduced by a somewhat technical preface; but you will understand it, and I feel sure it will please you.

I have begun my Advent work. I am preaching on the duty of man towards God. There have been a great many men in the congregation, and every Sunday they increase. It is sad to think, my child, that in our time there should be such apostasy from God among the *stronger sex*.

We will try to bring back those that have strayed. Give me your help in this work which is worthy of the splendid abilities of St. Paul, but in presence of which I feel such a weakling. However, I never let myself feel discouraged: what I have once undertaken I never relinquish, for God has endowed me with a stubborn obstinacy both of heart and head.

My poor mother remains in about the same state,

yet nothing is able to disturb her serenity or shake her faith. Her eyes are ever turned towards heaven or to me ; beyond these she neither knows nor wishes to know or see anything. I bless you, and offer you to Christ as a golden sheaf.

41

Paris : December 24, 1878.

My dear Child,—Have you had a happy Advent? For you it has been a time of peaceful detachment ; for me a time of strife. I have been powerfully and graciously upheld through you, for I have felt in the midst of struggle that you were watching and praying for me. The power of a missioner is not his own, but God's. The more God is in his heart, the more powerful he is. When he is religiously loved, he receives mighty, divine outpourings quite unawares, and sometimes in spite of himself, which descend upon him in power and abundance.

I have borne witness to the truth in the midst of contradiction ; but my strife has not withheld the crowd from pressing round my pulpit, and I thank God for the good He has accomplished by my ministry.

I yield myself, my child, to His sovereign influence. Ever as I advance, I commit myself into the hands of Christ, desirous of nothing but His glory and the spread of His kingdom in the midst of mankind. This makes me think of the ineffable mystery of predestination which frightens you, and which St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans places boldly before the eyes of the faithful.

Yes, God is the Master : all that we have or are

comes from Him. Our willing co-operation with Him can be traced, in the last resort, to His sovereign guidance: the creature has of his own merely his inferiority and nothingness. This is what we need to recognise; it is this which holds man dumb before the infinite power and wisdom of the *Cause of causes.* There exists in the seasoned Christian a tendency which we must avoid, almost to stand on the same level with the Infinite One, before Whom we should humbly bend in mute adoration. Words belong not to us, but to God. As for us, we are nothingness, which has no utterance. God is. The Word is the Self-expression of Him Who is. Let us be silent, therefore, in the presence of God; let us believe in His power, beauty, truth and infinite love; knowing this, that whosoever recognises God in His voluntary humiliation is worthy of Him, and is in fact one of the predestinate.

That we may unhesitatingly perform this act of perfect submission in the spirit of sons, we must turn our eyes to Christ, in Whom is revealed the infinite love of God to us. When a person is conscious of being loved, he too must needs love; and love's most ardent desire is to yield itself up and become absorbed in the object of love.

My child, the greatest mysteries of religion are illuminated by love. A theology which resides within the limits of abstract logic and mathematical deductions covers little ground: it is checked by the terrible contradictions which only a loving heart can unravel and explain.

When you read the ninth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, remember that it is your heart which must read, and love must hold the light. If reason desire to enter into the superhuman

tracts where man's spirit grows blind and faint, she must listen to the voice of the heart.

Remark, dear child, the tremendous part played by love in Christianity. It is the chief of virtues; it is an all-penetrating light. Keep this in mind, and let your whole life, down to its smallest details, be directed by this virtue of which Christ alone has the secret. It is by kindness that a soul is great. I would give all the most imposing virtues in exchange for a morsel of love. Other virtues, without it, are worthless; and immediately love appears, they take their position in her train.

The truest sign of kindness is forgetfulness of self: disinterested devotion to all that is weak, to all that makes appeal to us, even to all who have persecuted us. Be kind, child, in the full meaning of the word; wear the noble badge which distinguishes the disciples of Christ.

I hope you have not been suffering from the cold. We are having a severe winter, and I would that God's sun might warm you. You must take care of your chest and husband your strength, so as to be able to devote yourself unswervingly to the work of spreading Christ's kingdom. I have great faith in woman's influence at this critical time. Women who see what it is that God expects of the present generation, and devote themselves to the training of future Christian mothers, have the future in their hands, and I place much reliance upon them; I reckon you among the foremost of them. So let this thought give you fresh vigour, and add to your life the breadth and spaciousness which your unceasing activity requires.

But it is urgently necessary that you should give proof of simple virtues, and of forgetfulness of self.

I do not mean to say that you should remain in a state of passive inaction, but that in your actions you should show no trace of self. There is only one 'self' which has any right of obtrusion—Christ's Self, the Divine Self. All others ought to efface themselves and disappear before good, and before God. Therefore, my child, put on the armour of courage and hope for this New Year, which is to rank as the glad decisive year of your life. You are for my soul a joy greater than I can express.

Forward, then, with God's blessing! Always remember that they who are striving to be worthy of Christ must ever look onward and upward.

Father de B. has been staying with me—a welcome and dear guest. He has suffered much from the medical treatment he has had to undergo, but has borne it most patiently, and we have done our best to cheer him with brotherly love. He is naturally kind, and easily moved to an impetuous enthusiasm; his heart hurries away his head before he is aware of it. He should be successful as a preacher and do a great deal of good. I know that he writes to you, and am glad of it for your sake, dear child.

My mother is still about the same; her spiritual strength is all-sufficient. What an inflexible character she has, and what love for her son in that ardent heart! She gives you her love and blessing. Good-bye, my child. Yours in the depth of the Spirit.

42

Paris: December 31, 1878.

My dear Child,—This brings you only my blessing as a pledge of Christ's. At the beginning of this New Year, impress upon your heart these three

words: sacrifice, again sacrifice, and always sacrifice.

This is a word which frightens only those who do not really love; it will fill you with joy. Yours in Christ.

43

Paris: January 22, 1879.

My dear Child,—Did you get 'Jerome Savonarola' which I sent you? You will be charmed with it when you read it. The world no longer possesses men of such nature—men of inflexible character, who can live like lions and die like lambs. It is something superhuman: one's heart sings at beholding such heroism in poor human nature. The dust of which we are made does not always smother the radiance of the soul. The poverty of the vessel serves but to enhance the preciousness of the liquid it holds. Nowadays we do not know what an unconquerable soul is. We have those which appear to be made of *india-rubber*, but none of brass, or bronze, or steel; and yet anything, to be durable, must be composed of a resisting metal. How it gladdens me, my child, to see you gradually growing in Christ! The efforts of your soul are a source of deepest joy to me, and I know that you will spare no pains to add these joyful encouragements to my life.

Father de B. tells me you have been unwell since Christmas; is it so? Do not fail to relieve my anxiety quickly. You haven't the right to be ill without my permission, and I refuse it—absolutely. Your duty just now is not to undergo bodily pain, but to endure an invisible martyrdom in heart, in will, and in soul. Your duty is to work for the renovation

of the feminine world whose Christian virtues will save us, but whose vices, if unchecked, will continue to lead an entire nation and its civilisation headlong to destruction.

Be then, my child, a worker for God, and remember my ideas and advice, and make use of them in the daily practice of instruction and education. Set free the minds of your pupils, and teach them to rule themselves bravely in the power of God, in accordance with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This is completely overlooked in the education of most men, and is entirely foreign to that of women.

You know I have been making a little mission journey to —— just over the frontier. What people these B——s are! How different from my Parisian congregation! I felt like a man, accustomed to play on a delicate string instrument which throbs with a soul's expression, now condemned to thrum upon a harp with frozen strings. However, I believe that after a time one could find entrance into this people, stir them, and rouse their enthusiasm. Their exterior is rough and rugged as the hide of an elephant, but within is human nature; and that, after all, is the same everywhere. The same noble feelings can be made to stir within it, the same great ideals awake to enthusiasm, the same lofty causes are able to gain its adherence and to make heroes of men. But one does not get down to this human nature all at once.

Notwithstanding, I am very glad that I went, for I have been privileged to see a social and religious state of things differing from our own, and have had the opportunity of learning somewhat by comparing them.

Everywhere religion has a terrible fight to maintain. On all sides one meets souls whose faith has

been breached and lies in ruins. The storm of politics, the blinding light of modern science, the seductions of civilisation combine to make an atmosphere in which multitudes of believers swoon and fall inert.

Pray fervently, my child, that God may raise up souls, strong and energetic, to dissipate this atmosphere of death. The work is hard—I know something of it.

It is a work which requires not only intellectual effort, but also, and in a far greater degree, virtue, which is spiritual effort, and sacrifice, which is the blood of broken hearts. Ask of Christ that I may rise to the height of my great vocation, and that there may be nothing wanting either of mind or heart or soul when I lay my share of weight in the scales.

You know, child, that we are working in partnership, and that you have already placed your share in the same scale in which I am about to lay mine.

One part of your wishes will be realised, for I have made up my mind to go to Rome, and shall start after Easter. My trip will not be a long one, but long enough for me to do what I have to do there. I shall be glad to see Leo XIII.; I feel an attraction for this soul. Leo XIII. is the herald of a new world: I perceive a star upon that brow so majestic and austere.

Good-bye. I bless you from the bottom of my heart; and the heart is like God—infinite. Ever yours.

44

Paris: January 29, 1879.

My dear Child,—I bless the Providence which guides you with such infinite goodness, and feel sure

that you do so also from your bed of sickness. If I am wrong you must tell me, and then I will show you the marvellous work the Spirit of God is accomplishing in you. Yield yourself up meekly to Christ. Submission is the virtue of sufferers and the test of love.

When we are in health we act and work, for it is a time for spontaneous action and energy. But when we are sick we take refuge in God, and it is a time for the poor bruised spirit to seek new strength in sleep.

At such times when your head aches, so that you can scarcely hold it up, think of the measureless sufferings of Christ and offer the pain to Him.

I fancy I remember Dr. L. and must have seen him at N. two or three times. He is a grave man who has imbibed the irreligious opinions of the age without, however, abandoning that respectful and courteous attitude which is the heritage of noble characters. How sad it is to think that, at the present time, a multitude of young souls is being drawn to an almost fatal distance from God by seductive doctrines which appear deep and scientific, the treacherous falsity of which they are frequently quite unable to discover. I am filled with pity for these spiritual wrecks. Unless God had protected my soul, into what errors should I not have plunged! That is why my life is devoted, my child, to bringing back to the truths of religion those who have abandoned them and have surrounded themselves with poor imitations. You know you are my little partner mystically in this holy work.

I am preparing my Lent lectures, whose object is to establish the fact of God's positive intervention in human affairs. Has that God Whom reason con-

ceives as the infinite cause of nature ever intervened in our history? That is the question. All religion hangs upon the answer. The men of science—the scientists, I mean—deny it as being impossible; certain philosophers, as being incompatible; certain critics, as fanciful. All these good people have to be refuted, and I am working to this end with the courage of a soldier and the candour of a knight. Pray for me; help me, my child.

This is a very serious letter for a poor little invalid, but I know it will be carefully read all the same, and I hope that in it you will find strength to support the trial. Do not be anxious about your elder brother: he is much better, and his illness is not the dangerous one which was at first feared. If André comes to see me I will let you know what he is fitted for, and I will help him for God's sake and for yours.

Write soon and tell me that you are well again, and obey your doctor's orders as though I were the doctor.

Good-bye. I bless you. If we had a strong faith I should lay my hand on your head and say, 'In the name of Christ rise and walk!' and you would arise. But, on the contrary, what I say to you is, 'In the name of Christ love and suffer'—which is a greater thing. I bless my only daughter.

45

Paris: February 7, 1879.

My Child,—I feel that your suffering unites us still more closely; do not be afraid of God's hand which falls according to His appointment. Inward tribulation has been the cause of the inward

bodily pain you suffer. But I am not fearful on your account; the soul is mighty; and since she has in her ardour buffeted the body, she will gently return to revive it.

Submit to suffering, unbrace yourself. I do not say *brace yourself* to the cross of Christ. I am touched by the thought that you are beloved and are being put to the proof. In times of solitariness look fixedly at the foot of your bed, and you will see me there.

I should indeed like to see you again, but we must leave that to God, remembering that our souls meet in the depth of His infinite love. May the Spirit breathe upon the ruins wrought through sacrifice, and marvellously build them up.

I have given back to Father de B. the letter which your heart dictated for him. I read it, and thought it full of insight, tact, and sound affection. The Father brought it to me, in the true spirit of a son, and asked me to read it. As I was occupied at the time I was not able to talk it over with him, but I will send for him to-day or to-morrow and speak frankly to him and let him disclose his heart fully. You form a right estimate of his kindly nature which will always lack, to a certain degree, the sovereign ability of restraint. The good Father de B. is effusive: he explodes like a shell, shooting forward aimlessly. His heart gets miles in front of his head. But his intentions are good, and, aided by his surroundings, he will no doubt profit by good advice and affectionate warnings. It is a good thing for him that he is under my pastoral crook, and I, for my part, am glad to shelter him under my wing.

Write soon to your young comrades to tell them to come and see me. For your sake I will do all I

can for them. Pray much for me, my child; in the preparation of my Lent lectures I have need of light from God. We have troubled times as well as troubled spirits; and I, who am in command of my ship and responsible to God for it, have to keep a constant watch on the horizon.

I suffer with you, dear child, uniting myself to all that is best in your soul. Rejoice in this, and march boldly to the top of Mount Horeb. Yours.

P.S.—As to my journey to Rome, my only object is to establish personal relations with some important men in the Eternal City, and to provide myself with support at the centre of Catholicism while I am doing my work of evangelisation in our country. I have need of friends, dear child, who have so many unknown enemies. It is for conquest over there among the Ultramontanes that I make this journey. Moreover I must hurry off immediately after Easter, because we have the election of the Provincial this year, and it is my duty to be there a month beforehand—in June.

Well, there is nothing to fear; all will turn out well; and what God's goodness provides for our encouragement He will bring to pass by His almighty power.

I bless you tenderly.

46

Paris: February 14, 1879.

My dear Child,—Do you know what an illness such as yours is like? It is like growing a new skin. The old Theresa is going to be burnt, and a new one will be formed. Leave everything to God, Who

watches over you. He is the great Artist, Who produces His masterpieces only on the condition of being left alone.

I love your resignation, your entire devotion to the cause to which I have already consecrated my life. Continue, dear child, to yield yourself to God, and to stretch yourself upon the cross on which Christ died. Your sacrifice causes gleams of brilliant light to fall upon me; your heavy cross becomes in my hand a sword for great battles. Rejoice, therefore, and may the Spirit dower you with the secret joys which are the very life of noble hearts whom nought created can satisfy.

My work is progressing: I feel an increase of strength as I fight the terrible enemies who attack God and strive to wrest from Christ His halo of divinity. I at least will testify to this outraged God, and I thank Providence Which has chosen me, all unworthy as I am, for this sublime office.

On Sunday I am to preach in aid of a most interesting society, whose object is to obtain work for poor women. It is a capital idea, because charitable gifts, conditioned by work, are no source of humiliation to the recipients. I shall use this occasion to enlarge upon woman's part in the present religious crisis of the world. I shall give you some of my ideas on the subject in my next letter: they may help to brighten your life and to raise in your estimation the splendid calling to which God has summoned you. I have seen Madeleine S. Father Chocarne is offering his church for the fourth Sunday in Lent (March 23); so write at once to your young friend, or send me the address, as I cannot otherwise let her have this good news. She is a dear child, but is lacking in frank unreserve: she must learn to look upwards. I

received her cordially both for your sake and because she seemed to me worthy of the heavenly light.

Keep yourself calm—no emotion, no tears unless these come of their own accord. Very many thanks to your assistants and to your little girls. It makes me so happy to know that you are beloved. I give you my blessing, and I shall rely upon your dear friends for constant news of you.

47

Paris: February 25, 1879.

My Child,—You have prayed and I am healed. A squall struck my sail, the boat rocked heavily, but no harm happened either to rudder or mast. And now, three days later, the sea is again smooth as a lake, without a ruffle upon its heaving surface, and I am sailing free across the shoals towards the heavenly shores from which a mission-priest must never remove his eyes.

I am so pleased with your child-like delight at the sight of the box of bonbons. I quite thought that the granite rock in the middle of them would be a success, for you have always loved that. It will remind you of the rock from which it was broken, and towards which we march day and night to gain the summit.

Yield up your soul more and more to the influence of the infinite love of Christ. Illness should teach the lesson of perfect gentleness. If Christ be there, fever is a fire to burn away unhealthy tissues. Let the fire of God destroy in you what it will.

I rejoice more than I can say as I watch the hand of the unseen Master at work upon your life; I knew that there was in you somewhat of the divine.

This illness will have great consequences for you: it is a way of physically dying and reviving without passing through what is commonly called death.

How many things will be utterly consumed in the crucible under the action of the pitiless flame of God! Give full scope, dear child, to all within you that is divine, and so reach the peaceful realms illumined by Christ's light, where the shadows of earth do not fall.

How strange that I knew all about you and Father Mercier!

Was it not you who told me of it? You say not, so it must have been Mme. F.; yet I thought it was you. The appearance on Good Friday was the torch heralding the Star. You do well in disclosing to me your entire life and your soul, and I esteem you for it.

I hope to be able to begin my lectures on Sunday next from four till five o'clock. You must pray for me at that time, that I may obtain what the missioner needs in order to win souls. My subject this year is the 'Supernatural and Real Intervention of God in Human Affairs.'

God exists: He has created nature changeless in its laws, and man free in the evolution of his intellectual power. Very good. But is that all? Does God withdraw Himself into transcendent isolation, or has He direct dealings with man whom He has thus created? This is the question at issue between believers and unbelievers, and it is a very serious one: it is the battlefield at the present time in dispute by those who defend and attack religion. I need God's power: pray for it, child, for your Father; be indeed my only daughter.

I must go to Rome in Easter-week, and it is difficult to say exactly when I shall return. But do

not be afraid; God calmly overrules all things. We are both in His hands; let Him lead us whither He will. Is it not better to lie down to sleep in tranquillity upon the breast of Providence? It will reunite us in good time.

Take good care of yourself, and do not get up yet. With true tenderness I bless you.

48

Paris: March 7, 1879.

My poor dear Child,—I am living very close to you in heart, and I pray to Christ, our beloved Master and our God, to grant you strength to yield yourself to be burnt, consumed, reduced in the crucible of pain into which He has cast you.

Forget self—it is ever that. Give up 'me'—this fatal 'me' that must needs be stripped off at any cost, and yielded without restraint to God. You are being cherished as a beloved child, surrounded with affection. Remember, it is God's hand which is on you; which is dealing with Theresa in order to sanctify her.

In the midst of your pain, be ever the heaven-sent strength to aid my difficult task. I rely upon you, knowing that you belong to the race of noble hearts which are satisfied with nothing less than heroic self-devotion.

Life's details are of little importance. I know that they occupy considerable space in women's hearts, but we must learn to rise above the mere trifles of earth and keep the soul constant to what is the one thing needful. Our days pass away, closing in like the days of autumn—ghostly pale, full of sad

sighings. When the yellow leaves are falling, child whom I have called to God, listen to my voice. Turn your wistful eyes to that bright Sun which is revealed to every soul wherein slumbers a spark of the divine —to Christ crucified. Read again and again the Gospel narrative of His Passion, and weep—weep for this Martyr all the tears which fill your heart. We cannot weep as do the men and women of this darkened world; we weep as Christ wept in His agony in Gethsemane or on Calvary.

I share the very secrets of your heart; I know its most hidden springs, and therefore I speak these astonishing words, which are only for the use of true friends.

I am quite well, after a short period of physical exhaustion which I have overcome. On Sunday I preached by means of supernatural strength: it was you who aided me. I felt upraised on wings invisible, and I fought like a gladiator rather than a wounded man.

I have come to Arcueil for a few days for change of air, and to get rid of the wretched feeling which oppressed me. Now I feel alive again, and the *blazing* of my thoughts shows me that my life has resumed its normal course.

It is true, then, that poor Mother Sainte-C. is leaving us: Father Hue is extremely sad about it. His great heart is full of tenderness: his white hair cannot obscure his wonderful power of sympathy, and a youthfulness on which years leave no mark. Though resigned to the inexorable will of God, he suffers acutely, and I much fear the result which the death of the most esteemed member of his congregation at N. may have upon his health. I am deeply interested in what you tell me about Mother C. She was a valiant soul, and I feel sure death

found her as brave as a general about to deliver an assault with his best troops.

I shall not fail to go to see Mr. A. on his return, but I am enormously busy. You must not forget that, and you can try to imagine what my day's work is—always in the breach, exchanging blows with the enemy, and compelled nevertheless to find time for the thousand calls from within. I am no longer my own master, alas! I am at everyone's service who comes to beg, for God's sake, a word of life. The leisure of youth is gone for ever, and there is but one way to find time for all—to forget self.

Pray for Christ's light for me. I am dealing this year with the most important religious question which can suggest itself to the wavering spirit.

Has God, the personal God, living, intelligent, and free, intervened in human affairs? Yes or no?

Faith has no doubt of it, enlightened reason affirms it; but at the present day how many souls there are who are doubtful, and whose understanding is darkened! Answer must be made to them and salvation afforded by the answer. I open the gates to men of goodwill; I am a pioneer who fells trees, removes rocks, bridges the torrents, and cries to the hesitating wayfarers, 'Forward, the way is clear!'

I am with you, dear sick one, dear only child, and in blessing you I cry also to you, Forward!

49

Arcueil: March 12, 1879.

My poor dear Child,—I write to you from Arcueil, having returned this week. I have come to spend a few days with Father Hue, who is very unwell. I wanted to be at hand; for although his condition is

not actually serious, nevertheless at his age a feverish state is capable of suddenly becoming dangerous, and a loss of strength, which cannot be regained, a peril.

I thought it my duty to conceal Mother Sainte-C.'s death from the poor old Father. I have taken charge of all letters addressed to him. Although he is perfectly conscious, he has occasionally a high temperature, which causes a clouding of his reason and leaves him neither time nor liberty to think of those he loves best.

We must lend an ear, my child, to death's stern teachings and keep ever looking, as I do continually, towards the shore we shall presently approach, to be God's for ever in the infinity of our love. I have never been intoxicated with the love of earth. This world's fumes have never asphyxiated me ; my gaze is drawn to the Infinite, and I am conscious of having been created for a better world than this little planet. Yet we must not decry it ; for it was on its breast, as in a cradle, that our eyes opened to the eternal light.

Take good care of yourself, and welcome the kind care of others for you. Learn to see God's love in that tender affection by which you are surrounded. I was so delighted with the little flower you sent me. It was still fresh when it arrived ; yet I seemed to see in its petals, and at the bottom of its cup, traces of your pain and your distress mingled with all that your heart contains of what is kind, religious, tender, and divine.

Keep on suffering, my only daughter, in order that my work may be blessed. Your sufferings are not fruitless. My sermons are working a decided result, which consoles me for the sensation they are making. I do not like a fuss, and it so happens that these addresses in the Faubourg St. Honoré are arousing

considerable attention and attracting quite an exceptional and distinguished congregation.

God knows that my only ambition is to bring back to Christ souls which have deserted Him, and to win to Him those who now blaspheme. Help me, therefore, with all your patience and with all your filial love.

My health seems more settled, thank God! Nothing is more cumbersome, to my mind, than a sick soldier.

Good-bye, dear child. I heartily pray God to nurture you in His love and holiness. I bless you, and with my blessing I send you my love in religion.

50

Paris: March 21, 1879.

My Child,—Your little bunch of sweet flowers was delivered at Arcueil just when the coffin was about to be placed on the funeral car. I laid them myself by the side of the coffin, and whispered, 'Little flowers, you shall take our place, since we cannot follow.'

This has been a hard week for me. Since Saturday I have lived with death; for it was I who saw to everything, who gave the dear old Father the last consolations of God, and who arranged for his last dwelling place—his final rest. He will sleep in our cemetery at Flavigny in the midst of our brethren; he will have the unceasing fervent prayers of the white-robed novitiate, who are preparing for the great labours of life surrounded by the aged dead, who lie worn out by their long and bitter strife on God's behalf.

There is nothing in particular to be said about the

end of Father Hue. His splendid life waned, like the close of a long day, in perfect serenity and peace. He had been dying these two years. His soul was fixed on God across life's boundary; and his body, exhausted by unremitting toil, refused any longer to do his bidding. It caused him real suffering, but in sweet resignation he refrained from complaint. His trustful heart lay dreaming during the last days of his old age in a sort of St. Martin's summer, such as we have in the mountains at the end of November. St. Martin's summer did not shine for him, or rather the dear Father enjoyed what was better—the bright light of eternity, in comparison with which all other is as darkness. His eyes which closed on earth's light are now opened to the light supernal, and they behold those divine mysteries after which he groped amid terrestrial shadows, and by dint of immense research. During the last hours of his life he said to me, 'How I have suffered! It is God's will,' and he added, alluding to the loss which the congregation of which he was the founder would suffer by the death of Mother Sainte-C.: 'Doubtless it is for my daughters that I undergo this.'

There was no agony. Almost to the last he was in possession of all his faculties, and smiled tenderly. Being unable to move his left side, he said to the servant who was aiding him to turn over, 'Ah, my good Jules, it is the Left, the Left Centre which is sick, and the cause of it is the Right.' Then he closed his eyes. When Father Houlès anxiously touched his forehead, he again looked up and signed to Father Guillemet to approach. 'The Father Prior is in grief, is he not?' he whispered in a scarcely audible voice. His eyes then closed, his breathing became difficult, and the death-rattle began: in a few moments all

was over. The funeral took place on Tuesday at the School. It was simple and affecting. The various classes sent beautiful wreaths which were deposited on the catafalque. Then the last prayers were said, we sprinkled the body with holy water, and it was borne to Flavigny under the care of Father Mercier, whom I deputed for this last journey.

As for you, dear child, take good care of yourself. Run no risks, and in writing to me make use of the faithful hand of your companion. Do not scruple to make your confession through her: she is worthy of your full confidence. Thank her for me and ask her to pray earnestly for your Father, as you do.

Do not be self-indulgent; that is the worst of illness: it makes people children again, absorbing them in the material wants which form the first stage of our early life. Be ashamed of it, but do not grieve over it.

Now here is the answer to your two Bible difficulties. With regard to the first, remember that it is a parable, and that there is no question of an actual relation of what happens in hell. The lesson to be drawn—and the lesson is wholly in the parable—is, first, that the present life is given us in order to prepare for the other; secondly, that as a rule the dead cannot intervene miraculously for our salvation. Our salvation has to be worked out in accordance with the means which have been established by Providence.

As to the detail of the Passion narrative which perplexes you, my dear child, we must suppose that a certain time elapsed between Jesus' words, allowing His disciples to sleep and His cry, 'Arise!' During this time Jesus, steeled to His sacrifice after His long Agony in the Garden, watched over His disciples as

they slept; then, when danger approached, He said to them, 'Behold, Judas cometh.'

This sleep of theirs beneath the watch of Christ seems to me admirable.

Have no more perplexities, most dear child, and make haste to get well. My addresses seem to be having a great result. Pray, pray, and suffer. My tender blessing, which you will share with your companion.

51

Arcueil: March 28, 1879.

My dear Child,—I have come to Arcueil to collect Father Hue's papers. My heart ached as I entered his empty cell; and whilst I opened the drawers and cupboards which contained his manuscripts, and handled objects which he had continually used, it seemed to me as though the soul of my old friend was exhaled from them like a sweet mysterious perfume.

During the course of the year I shall thoroughly examine these treasures—the result of more than thirty years' work—and I hope to be able to write something worthy of the memory of that obscure, unknown combatant, who devoted his life to a silent struggle on behalf of truth.

I am glad, my child, that you give me minute details of your life in your sick-room, transmitted so lovingly by the pen of your faithful companion. Even the blossoming of a flower is an event for you, limited as you are to movement between your table, loaded with beautiful pots of flowers, and your bed of pain.

As for me I am still fighting, still pleading the cause of eternal truth with the unbelieving souls of

our period. And I thank God that I have had victories. More than one dead soul is awaking; more than one frozen heart is warming.

However feeble a man may be, it seems good to Christ to choose him as an instrument; and Christ is to-day what He was when He lived on earth—the Resurrection and the Life.

I have had visits from several eminent men who have been touched by my words—distinguished physicians and *savants*, such as Pasteur, and writers, such as Dumas. What a joy it is to cause a ray of the eternal brightness to fall across the brains of men who lead the opinion of the age!

You ask me what I do after my sermons. Well, nothing: I let myself calm down. I am like a rough sea, and I wait till the following day for the disturbance to die away. I ask God to vitalise in souls the words I have sown in His name, and then I try to still myself to sleep in Him.

Last Sunday, there was a collection for the undertaking which is carried on by M. S. I heartily commended the work, and M. has since written to thank me.

My advice to you, dear child, is: Follow exactly the treatment prescribed, and get well soon. Be as fond as you like of *pommes de terre frites*, but don't eat them without the doctor's permission, or without thanking God for having made such good things. I have a very tiring week before me, as I am going to take a Retreat. Pray for your Father more earnestly than ever, and give yourself up wholly to God for the sake of the work. Good-bye. My blessing on you and on the faithful hand which writes for you. With infinite love I commit you to Christ.

52

Paris: April 1, 1879.

My Child,—When your pain increases, you must try to feel that I am all the more with you in the fulness of the Spirit of Christ. Forget self; cease to count up the days. If I come by a letter, it is God Who sends me. If I fail to come, it is God Who holds me back. If I arrive regularly, it is the rhythm of the Spirit; if irregularly, it is He, again, changing the time. No one is more subject to impulse than I. I go whither the breath from on high carries me. But believe, my child, that I ever watch over your bed of pain with a father's love.

So we will decide to importunate Christ and pray Him to heal you of this obstinate fever. On Saturday, the day of St. Vincent Ferrier who raised forty dead people to life, I shall say Mass at half-past seven at the altar of St. Dominic to your intention.

You must try, my poor little feverish one, to communicate at that time, if it be allowed. I add this in order that in nothing at all your own will may have play. Ah! Self-abnegation; what a splendid virtue it is. It is beautiful in those who are in good health, and simply adorable in the sick, such as you.

Continue to suffer for your Father, my child. Be a resistless power with Christ by virtue of your patience and your sweet charity. You will carry onward the result of my words by means of your sufferings. Nay, you must rejoice in your labour, which is at once so disinterested and fruitful. Last Sunday I preached with additional unction, and I feel sure that my audience were more powerfully touched than ever. The thought occurred to me: Whence comes this strange inspiration, this resistless wave

which carries me on its crest? And then I remembered my dear suffering daughter who was crying to God and saying, 'On behalf of the missioner!' I was not wrong, was I?

I am so happy, dear child, to think that you are not thrown into disquietude though beset by fever, loss of sleep, and bodily discomforts. I am learning to love your companion the more I hear of her kindness to you.

I have come into possession of Father Hue's papers. They are all lying in a small box, and when I have time I intend to go through all his MSS. and to attempt to pick out some of the finest pearls; for I fear it is impossible to publish the whole. Father Hue had real talent, but somehow isolated. He gave himself up to the play of his own thoughts, and neglected to correct his impressions by those of others. There resulted from this a certain gain in so far as they are hot-house products; but they are in a great measure like camellias, which cannot stand open air.

You want to know how I am? Very, very well. I must be well, to be able to support the burden of preaching. From to-night at eight o'clock I shall be preaching every day till Friday; do not fail to pray for me, both you and your companion. I have only a few hours left in which to prepare my sermon, so good-bye. With my religious love and tenderest blessing.

53

Paris: April 10, 1879.

My Child,—I was sorry to have your news concerning the trials you are still undergoing, and which I had imagined to be over. But I am not surprised.

Resign yourself; efface yourself. May your bodily weakness never afford you a reason for allowing your own wishes to predominate. Give yourself up like a beloved child to those who guide you, and who carefully and tenderly provide for your future.

For the time being, keep one object only in view—to get well. Cultivate the simple virtue of self-abnegation; all the rest I let you off. Nothing seems nobler to me than a heart in which self is forgotten, which asks for nothing, which has but one insatiable desire—namely, to offer itself with Christ in behalf of truth, of goodness, of holy causes.

I know you are capable of this heroism, and therefore I keep urging you to endeavour ceaselessly to attain to it. Your illness will turn out to have been a most austere school of perfection, and it must needs be that God's designs for you should be carried out in every detail. Aim at a serenity which nothing can affect. You will gain it, my child, only by a total forgetfulness of self carried to the point of heroism. When you see the beautiful flowers you love smiling at you close at hand, and when you return the caresses which they give in their pretty fashion, call your young friend and whisper in her ear: 'My dear hand, take this vase of flowers and place it for me at the sepulchre of Christ, before His tabernacle. Father Didon wants me to die to everything, and to learn to forget self even on a bed of sickness.'

The Spirit ever breathes, my poor dear child, and He carries onward to the ideal those whom He has once touched.

And then let the storm pass over. When you have learned to be God's alone, who or what can touch you? Will you not be inaccessible and invincible? I write thus to you with the spectacle of

Christ before my eyes—Christ suffering, dying, and nevertheless loving. Of Him I am going to preach on Friday at three o'clock, but how? I am like a shepherd living on my mountain: the mountain is Christ. The shepherd is asked, 'Well, what are you going to say about the mountain?' I do not know; but one thing I am sure of, that I shall speak of it passionately because it is part of my soul; because I draw my life from its savage grandeur and its glorious beauty. On Sunday next I shall finish my lectures, and place the coping-stone on my little pyramid. I thank you, dear child, for having been my little invisible mason. I am certain that your sacrifices have given me a mysterious power, and that my apostolic ardour is the outcome of your beneficent sufferings.

I start for Rome on the Sunday after Easter, but I shall write to let you know the plan of my journey. Good-bye, my child. My blessing be with you.

54

Paris: April 19, 1879.

My dear Child,—Are you better? Have you borne this fresh trial without rebellion? Do not depart by a hair's breadth from the path of heroism by which Christ is leading you to another Calvary. We walk side by side; lean upon my arm with confidence, for I rest my weight upon the cross of Him Who is our Saviour.

I have been wanting to write to you all this week, but have been tossed in the resistless whirlpools of a life still more insistent in its calls even than it was during Lent. There have been the last ears to glean; the last sheaves were waiting to be carried

to the garners of the Heavenly Father. It has been a splendid harvest; *we* have worked hard, and I willingly ascribe to you the principal share in this result, which is the best reward of all my labours.

I start to-morrow on my long journey—to-morrow at eleven o'clock. I shall go to bed at Chambéry at one o'clock in the morning on Monday, leaving at seven for the mother's nest, where she will welcome me with wings outspread.

I cannot give her more than one full day's happiness. On Tuesday I shall have to set off to Marseilles because Dr. Poucel will be awaiting me there. He will travel with me to Rome, and will look after me as Raphael watched over the young Tobit. I do not think I can reach the Eternal City before Sunday. This little itinerary will help you to follow me in thought, and in prayer for God's blessing. Do you know, my dear child, that for the last three days I have been living in the midst of a hurricane which tears at me from every side? It is impossible to leave for six weeks a community of thirty religious, without being obliged to provide for contingencies and being compelled to give everyone a hearing who requests it.

Poor Father de B. passed away yesterday. You will scarcely believe that I was unable to have ten minutes' talk with him, although he begged me with tears in his eyes. A dozen times I began to converse with him; a dozen times we were interrupted.

It is so painful to me to think that your trials are not yet at an end, but I trust in God, and I know that He loves you.

You must pray much, if my journey is to be blessed. But it will be: your sufferings have a

grand object, and I believe in your nobility of heart which will let you see their stimulating effect.

I shall see Leo XIII. I will tell you all he says to me. Once there, I shall not be able to do more than send you short despatches, as men do on the field of battle.

I shall return from Rome newly invigorated and armed to meet fresh battles. Here I am in the prime of my life, with my career lying open before me, and what I have to do is to die by slow fire with Christ for the sake of the truth—His truth—which I defend.

Take care of yourself and do not worry. Have no doubts of God. If it be His will that you drink the cup to the dregs, drink it with a determination inspired by the example of Jesus in the Agony. I wish I could heal you by a word! Why is not the Master there Who called the dead to life? I give my blessing to the 'hand' who is so faithful to you, and to yourself I send my deep affection.

I am dragged on all sides—now this way, now that—and have begun again twenty times in order to finish this letter.

Yours, my child, in Christ.

55

Rome: May 4, 1879.

My dear Child,—I am longing to hear from you, perhaps even more than to send you news of myself. We are very far from each other; but though I shrink at the thought of the great distance between us, my heart is relieved of anxiety when I listen to the voice of the Spirit. Space does not exist for Him Who fills all. By a stroke of His pinions He

annihilates it, and that which is an insurmountable barrier to matter serves but to augment His power and to manifest His omnipotence.

I reached Rome at the end of April, having made the journey by sea. Dr. Poucel and I took passages on the 'Provence' for Naples, and we had a splendid crossing. On leaving the harbour, however, a dreadful accident happened. The spars of our vessel became entangled in the rigging of a vessel alongside, and our mainyard got unshipped and fell with tremendous noise on the deck. In its fall—it weighed more than four tons—it killed a poor labourer on the deck of the other vessel. I saw his body, lying face upwards to the sky, as I stood gazing down upon the scene, and I gave him my blessing and God's pardon.

The 'Provence' steamed out of the harbour and proceeded straight on her course without a look backward. All went well, and I hardly suffered at all from the motion. How beautiful the Mediterranean islands are! A vision of bare rocks rising out of an unruffled sea, yet possessing a subtle charm, an irresistible witchery. One looks at them and nods to them as to friends. Naples is dazzling in its beauty, but filthy as regards its inhabitants. It makes you ill to see these lazy people, these *lazzaroni* in rags. *Vive la France!* Vesuvius rears its sterile peak which blazes out into fire every night. I hardly had a glimpse of the sullen giant, who wrapped himself in clouds and did not vouchsafe to strip them off.

Rome is very much altered. You would take her for the capital city of some king or other rather than the city of the Popes. She who was once a Christian Minerva seems to me, in spite of her clean new palaces, to have stepped down to the rank of a vulgar metropolis.

Fancy, my child, that the grass is growing in the courtyard of the Vatican, and you could almost mow it in front of the portico of St. Peter's.

The world is in the throes of change, and Rome is feeling the reflex motion resulting from the general disturbance. What will be the result? That is hidden from our poor human eyes.

I have seen and heard Leo XIII. from a distance. There was a general audience in the Hall of the Consistory for a body of six hundred French pilgrims, so I joined them as the six hundred and first; remained close to the door, I contented myself with seeing and hearing him at a distance of thirty yards, since I hope to see and hear him face to face very shortly.

The aspect of the Sovereign Pontiff is just as it is represented in his photographs—a noble brow, pronounced features, predominance of the ruling thought over the heart which must obey. His voice is strong, grave, and accentuated. Every word is clear cut and well finished. As he speaks you feel that he deliberately purposes to be always restrained, tranquil, and tranquillising. He spoke in French, and in the course of a short speech expressed a real sympathy for France, and unbroken faith in her destiny. The Pope gesticulates; with ample gestures of both arms he seems to draw the whole world to his feet and bestow his benediction upon it.

I scribble off these first impressions for you, my child, just as they affected me. When I have seen the Holy Father more closely I shall write with more detail.

I have had a very kind welcome here, and I feel sure that my journey will be successful. My former masters, who are now old men, were delighted to see

me—whom they knew as little more than a child—now grown to be a strong and hearty man, and showed me real affection. My old comrades are now successful men. Father Zigliara, who was only just before my time, is on the point of being made a cardinal. It was most important for me to renew acquaintance with these men. In the future, amid the struggles in which I must engage and the attacks to which I shall be subjected, this journey of mine may prove to have been of great assistance.

Continue to pray, dear child, and, if God demand it, to suffer a martyrdom. Do not give way, but rejoice in the devoted love of your companion whom I henceforth consider as one with you. Good-bye, my child. With deepest affection I bless you, and am yours in Christ.

56

Rome : May 16, 1879.

My dear Child,—Your last letter was a very mournful one. The impressionability of your character makes me afraid. I would not have your power of sensation diminished, for it is a great advantage to feel acutely. But I should like to see its sphere of action curtailed. When you are under the influence of certain impressions your whole nature is thrown out of balance—your ideas, resolutions, beliefs, hopes—in fact all. That ought not to be, my dear child. An impression, being but a surface disturbance, ought not to affect us in our depths. Whether we are gay or sad, beloved or abandoned, approved or misunderstood, applauded or persecuted, dead or alive, there are things, my child, that are deeper than that.

Whatever may happen, do not be cast down ; the will of God is behind our wretched, little human affairs, and we must have a heart noble enough to place it first, and to follow its sovereign guiding at any cost. I have never had any other principles of conduct during my life, and I want you to be in this, as in all else, my true and *very special* daughter.

Resolve, then, to be brave, determined, firm, and faithful : continue unconquered and serene in the midst of tribulations ; be unmoved as though dead, and wearing the happy smile of those whom Christ has blessed.

My life at Rome is full of interest. As I have already told you, it is not the monuments of ancient, pagan Rome which now excite my attention, nor even those of the Rome of the Popes. I am studying the lives of the men who occupy the first places in the hierarchy, and am trying to gain some idea of the vast movement of this marvellous organisation. Of course, here and there may be observed imperfections and inadequacy in the human mechanism of the Church ; but, notwithstanding these, it is wonderful. In any case it is well to become acquainted with it, when one is destined, as I am, to take a small part in the movement of things religious.

I am still awaiting my private audience, but the official request has been made. The Holy Father told the Bishop of Saint-Brieuc that he would receive me with pleasure, and I expect to see Leo XIII. one day early next week—between the 20th and the 25th. Immediately afterwards I shall leave for France, but I shall stop at various places on my way, and shall hope to be again in Paris about June 8th, or the 10th at latest. At Rome things move *piano*. Our

movement in France is that of the big hand of the clock ; theirs in Rome, that of the small hand.

Pray, dear child, for the success of my interview with the Holy Father. It will be a great joy to me in my life as missioner, as well as a great force and glorious light at this point in my ministry. Offer with this intention, dear child, some of those mournful impressions under whose assault your nature from time to time is shaken and crushed. Get well quickly ; don't be imprudent. May you have unclouded peace in those spiritual heights in which I would have you abide. Good-bye. My tenderest blessing be with you and your faithful 'hand.' Yours in Christ.

57

Rome : May 23, 1879.

My dear Child,—I have had the great joy, the great honour which I so earnestly desired : I have seen Leo XIII. at last. His Holiness deigned to honour me with a private audience. I am sure you will be as pleased as I was, and I can fancy your heart thrilling with the same sacred emotion which agitated mine.

My audience took place on Monday, May 19, at a quarter to two. The Pope's chamberlain, Mgr. Macchi—an excellent prelate to whom I am much indebted—introduced me into the presence of Leo XIII. I felt my heart beating, but overcoming my trepidation I advanced boldly, like a knight bringing his weapons to be blessed, knowing well their excellent temper.

The chamberlain on opening the door announced in a loud voice, 'Father Didon, Prior of the Dominicans of Paris !'

The Pope was standing by his writing-table, which was loaded with books and papers: he is a hard-working and studious man. He looked at me with an air of benevolence and said, 'Ah! Father Didon: he has already made a name for himself in the world!' According to etiquette I made the three customary genuflexions, then I kissed his slipper, and, remaining on my knees, said, 'Most Holy Father, I have come to lay at your feet my filial devotion to your person and my unbroken adherence to the Holy See.' So saying, I held forth my works, and added: 'May I venture to offer these little volumes to your Holiness? They are advance copies. Doubtless there are many imperfections in these pages; but, Most Holy Father, they are full of good intention.'

Leo XIII. took the books with a smile, turned over the leaves, and finally laid them on his table. Then he signed to me to rise. I rose to my feet, and in this attitude continued in conversation with him for twenty minutes.

I explained to him simply the character of the spiritual work I had undertaken in Paris in the midst of a young generation which had lost the Faith, dazzled by a false science, and often allured by the prospect of unmeasured liberty. I said to him that hearts are being kindled and entranced by science and by the generous instincts of modern thought; and that my policy consisted in using science and liberty as means, whereby wanderers might be restored to the Faith.

The Holy Father listened, gazed upon me with bright, kind eyes which, now and then, opened more widely when he received some new impression.

He warmly encouraged me to persevere in my

task, saying in an incisive manner, 'Yes, consecrate your science, all your science, all your eloquence, all your powers of influence to the service of the young men. Bring them back to God and to the Faith.'

I replied that it was a difficult task to unravel what is true from what is false in science; to distinguish between right and wrong in the passionate movements of modern thought.

'Difficult!' said the Holy Father. 'Why, all that is not opposed to natural law, to reason, and to Scripture is true and right, and the Faith cannot possibly stand in opposition to it.'

I love such broad-minded sane replies as these; for they denote an open mind which welcomes light from whatever quarter it comes, in full confidence that all light is of God, the offspring of the Eternal Contemplation, and begetter of Eternal Love.

Then we conversed on the insufficiency of philosophy to form the mind. The Holy Father deigned to tell me that he was preparing an Encyclical to the Bishops on this subject, and that he hoped it would result in good for the Church.

Leo XIII. is an adherent of St. Thomas in philosophy. 'It should be revived,' he said, 'for it is the philosophy of ages, of the Doctors and Fathers of the Church.'

'Your Holiness is aware,' I returned, 'of the fidelity of the Order of St. Dominic to the teaching of St. Thomas, her master. May I be permitted, therefore, to suggest that, since natural science has taken such hold upon the minds of the present generation, it would be advisable to add the study of natural science to that of the metaphysics of St. Thomas? By so doing we shall be, after all, only following the example of the Angelic Doctor himself,

who was deeply versed in all the known sciences of his day.'

The Holy Father's face brightened still more, and he expressed his approval by that Italian expression, which must be very familiar to you, dear Italian, *già, già*, meaning 'doubtless.' Leo XIII. continued to give these signs of approbation during the whole time I was speaking. He praised the French Dominicans, and said that many bishops had testified to our worth in the most flattering manner. It appears that the Pope is a poet. Such a nature as his prepares one to expect from him a love of form, elegance, and rhythm, and I noticed it in one particular. Speaking of St. Dominic he quoted some of the verses of Italy's divine poet, the immortal Dante, declaiming them with due observance of cadence and rhythm, as a true dilettante. They were verses from the 'Paradiso,' where the poet speaks of the two great defenders of the Church—St. Francis and St. Dominic—the former enkindled by the ardour of seraphim, the latter resplendent with the brightness of cherubim.

'Ah! most Holy Father,' I replied, 'how we need in our day fresh St. Pauls and St. Dominics, resplendent as cherubim, to lead back the world to God.'

He smiled at me with the smile of a Father; I was deeply moved.

Under the influence of this emotion, I again knelt at his feet and begged a special benediction for my mother, for all my friends, my religious, the Dominicans, and the Dominican nuns in France.

The Holy Father condescended to question me about my mother and replied, 'When you see her on your return to Paris, give your mother, your friends,

and your religious a special benediction.' So I give it you, dear only daughter; receive it on your knees.

As I left his presence, the Holy Father placed his hand on my shoulder and accompanied me two or three paces. It was a great joy to feel this hand of Christ upon me. Just as I quitted the room, he called to me in a loud voice, accompanied by a curt gesture, 'Continue, Didon; continue!'

These were his last words to me. I took them away with me as my orders, saying to myself as I went down the stairs of the Vatican, 'Aye, forward!'

We are reaching the end of an old world, dear child; a new world is being born through travail, and Leo XIII. will be its godfather.

And now about your self. Are you better? You will be pleased with this letter, but you must forget self and say to the fever, Go away!

I leave Rome almost at once. I shall be at Marseilles about the 27th, Le Touvet about the 30th, Flavigny the 3rd or 4th, and Paris the 7th or 8th.

I give you my tenderest blessing. Be strong! To you, too, I say, 'Forward!' A father's blessing to the 'hand.'

58

Le Touvet: June 5, 1879.

My Child,—I rejoice in your joy and my own. With this joy I send you my mother's blessing: she who is so brave sends a blessing to you as to her daughter. I leave to-morrow; on Saturday I shall be at Flavigny, and on Sunday night or Monday in Paris. My journey to Rome will never be forgotten: it marks the beginning of a new era in my life.

Your letters give me the deepest pleasure, for

they make manifest to me God's secret, ineffable working in you ; I seem to see the germination of His power.

The hour is not come for you to die. You have yet to become transformed, and to suffer. We shall not enter into heaven so very cheaply, my poor little only daughter.

Besides, there are few enough women for the great work, and gleaners are lacking in the harvest. Christ will keep you, in spite of illness, and you will be among those who share in spreading His name, and enlarging His kingdom in the coming age.

Regard the future with perfect tranquillity. Whatever Providence decrees is sure to be the best. You know how I aim always at a spirit of entire filial submission to God. Well, do the same ; yield to the guidance of God ; and in all circumstances, favourable or not (what matters it ?), do what God expects of you with joy.

This is the secret of unfailing peace, because it is self-abnegation carried to a sublime height.

Mean natures are continually preoccupied with their own affairs. They imagine that their pitiful, little plans are going to change the face of things. They believe that their little puff determines the wind's direction, and are convinced that it is within their power to establish the seasons according to their own caprice. No, my child, they are wrong. Leave such people to themselves, and be rather numbered among the simple who are truly great. These know well that God overrules all things ; that His breath lifts up and casts down according to His will ; that His word is all powerful in weaving the woof of circumstance ; and that the true aim of a religious life is to adapt oneself to the events ordered by Providence,

and to make the best use of them for God and for one's personal development. Remember this, my only daughter, and treasure it up in your heart, that it may serve as a light to guide the course of your whole life.

You know, too, that, whatever betide, I am by your side; my hand is on your shoulder to support, to guide, to encourage you for ever. All happiness and blessing be yours.

59

Paris: July 24, 1879.

I hope you received my telegram which should prove to you my constant remembrance of you. Take care of your health; it is important that you should become a tireless worker for God, and it would be annoying to be withheld by these bodily pains which cause you so much suffering. What a pity it is that I cannot gather for you one of our emblematic flowers, and send it in this letter! But I live on my barren mountain, which is gladdened by nought but the light of God's sun—not a bud, not the tiniest blade of grass. Austere it is and savage. So accept, dear child, a ray of the light divine, enhanced with all my affection and tender love of Christ.

I have seen Mme. de S., and hope I have been of some help to her. Hers is a fiery nature, and it is granted to few to overcome such. Tell this to E.: she will be pleased to hear it.

I am very busy just now with my preparation for St. Dominic's Day. This year it will be harder than ever for me, as I have undertaken to preach the great patriarch's panegyric myself. But I have noticed that strength has always been given me to carry out a good work, when I have appealed to God for help.

You ask me, dear child, whether it is inconsistent with filial submission to God to desire certain things, to prefer some things to others, and to strive to bring them about. My answer is, No; you may desire this or that; but under two conditions, viz. that you are quite sure that the object of your desire is legitimate, and that you will be resigned to accept the decision of the sovereign will of God. We are capable of self-deception even in our most legitimate and apparently praiseworthy desires; therefore a disinterested heart which is conscious of the shallowness of its wisdom puts all, without hesitation, in the hands of God Who cannot err.

I am quite unable to say certainly whether I shall be in Paris in September. The Prior of Flavigny is pressing me to preach during a Retreat of his religious, from the 10th to the 20th of that month; besides which I shall probably be summoned on the 1st to the election of the Provincial. So, if you come to Paris at that time, you must not *reckon* upon seeing me.

I shall be very sorry if it turn out that we are unable to meet, for I wish it fully as much as you do, and pray that it may be brought about. I resign myself, however, to God's will: you must follow my example of utter confidence in Providence, and have no fear. We ought to have but one aim—the will of God. Now God's will is never thwarted in its purpose.

Walk freely forward in the lofty path wherein I have placed you; the transformation which is being effected in you is my joy. In times of sadness I look at you, and when from a distance I behold you making progress, I am filled with endless comfort.

Beseech Christ to inspire me to speak worthily of

St. Dominic. If the sermon is happy I shall print it, and you will find pleasure in reading it; but if the mighty wind does not fill my wings, if the Spirit does not catch me up, I shall remain prone on the ground; and what is on the ground is not worth picking up. Abide in Christ, and pray Him to take me with Him into the truth and joy of His kingdom. I bless you with a father's love.

60

Paris: July 29, 1879.

My dear Child,—You want, you say, to read the Bible, and you ask me to recommend a good translation in a small size. I will see about it, my child; but you must wait a little while. I shall choose the best translation, and will send you the little book during the course of September or October. Meanwhile read the New Testament over and over again. The Old Testament is full of shadow; the New Testament is perfect day: the former is like starlight, the latter like bright sunshine. There are too, in the Old Testament, certain books which are extremely difficult, and which become absolutely impossible to attempt without guidance; whilst the New Testament resembles a noble river in which great beasts like elephants can swim, and yet the little lambs can quench their thirst in it without fear. You are one of the little lambs: go to the deep stream of the Gospel, or to the banks of that torrent called St. Paul; or wander by the limpid lakes which reflect in their depths all the stars of God—the Epistles of St. John. As to St. Thomas Aquinas, wait awhile; later on I will tell you what you may profitably read of the writings of that great Doctor.

I am to preach the panegyric of our patriarch on Monday at half-past three, and shall take shelter at Arcueil for three days to prepare this *filial* address in solitude.

We shall do it together, shall we not? You will pray fervently that the spirit of St. Paul may be upon me, that I may speak worthily of that great Spaniard whose children we are.

I shall set out for Saint-Brieuc immediately after St. Dominic's Day, August 5. I am obliged to rest awhile; the doctor orders it imperatively, and I feel myself that I need a fresh supply of nervous energy.

On the 17th I am preaching at Dieppe. You might indeed send me a few lines there, and I should be delighted. Write to the Orphanage of Our Lady of the Waves.

I doubt whether I shall be in Paris before September 7 or 8, and must leave immediately for Flavigny, where, as I have already told you, I preach at the Retreat, which is to be held from the 10th to the 22nd. So you see, my poor only daughter, that a meeting between us during September is exceedingly *risky*.

I cannot even make an engagement with you after the 22nd, because we shall be on the verge of a convocation of the Provincial Chapter. Well, it is in God's hands. He will bring us together if it be His will.

My article on the life of Father Hue is not yet finished, but I am working on it and it will appear, before very long. I owe profound gratitude to that noble old man who loved me so well; I can only repay it by my prayers, and by letting men know something of the quality of his high mind and God-enraptured soul.

I forgot to give you the translation of the Latin sentence which heads my Addresses. 'Man is said to be composed of body and soul, yet in such fashion as to form some third thing, which is composed of two others, and is neither; in fact, man is neither soul nor body.' This is very barbarous, but represents the sense. Man is neither body nor soul, but is composed of both.

This scholastic said some great truths in vile language. Good-bye, my child. Kneel down and receive my highest blessing, sent with all religious love.

61

Saint-Brieuc: August 9, 1879.

My dear Child,—I write to you from my hermitage. I have been now two days in this quiet seaside retreat where, for the past three years I have enjoyed from time to time such hours of happiness. How delightful it is to be alone: alone with God, our object of desire; alone with those dear ones from whom we are never absent; in face of the wide horizons of nature in which can be discerned the reflection of God. It is very long since I felt such imperious need of solitude. I quite understand why men used to retire to deserts: constant contact with our fellows robs us of somewhat. We cease to be ourselves after long jostling, and, what is worse, we lose our perception of God. Here I live like a hermit, scarcely is there another human being. On the beach a few fisher women go to and fro with their fish baskets and nets; Breton peasants, scattered in the fields, salute us with deepest reverence as we pass. When I stroll along the beach at the edge of the gentle, pleasant-sounding

sea my eyes dwell upon it, and listening I seem to hear God's voice mingled with the voices of those I love. It is a poetical manner of praying, but real nevertheless. I rise at six o'clock and say the Holy Mass at seven. Then I breakfast with my two companions ; afterwards I work till midday. Then comes dinner. And what a dinner—a dinner prepared by our own hands, a regular rustic meal.

To-day it will be my turn to fry the potatoes, which will be delicious. Yesterday, Friday, we had a most peculiar soup. It was *violet*. The Father who had had the greatest share in making it appeared before me in the deepest sorrow. 'The soup smells all right,' he said, 'but it is violet-coloured. I am afraid of poisoning you.' 'What have you put in it?' I asked. 'All sorts of things.' 'Well,' I replied, 'that is rather much!' However, I inspected it and observed fresh green peas floating in it; evidently it was these which gave the colour to our superb soup. We served it up: . . . it was as thick as freshly mixed mortar. Afterwards we went out on the beach, and it took five hours' walking in a strong sea breeze to get the better of that weighty delicacy, which is so much prized by the Bretons. This is a little sketch of what happens in my savage state of existence.

You may be sure that I shall fulfil all your commissions, and I hope that nothing will prevent our meeting at N. on the 7th of next month. I shall not dine there, for there is no object in doing so. The important thing is to see you; the rest is often a hindrance. So we will leave the rest.

Meanwhile, my dear only daughter, keep calm and let nothing trouble your peace. It is well that you should rest in the inward comforting knowledge of all

that I have been able to impart to you, and of all that Christ has laid up in your heart by means of me, though unworthy.

But lose no time; do not refuse the least bit of the cross. Go to whatever part of Calvary God wishes. Do not say: This will be here, and that later on. But rather: All shall be when and where Christ wills.

Pray that the sovereign will of God be done. What He wills, will come to pass; and what comes to pass will be well.

How beautiful nature is! Happy are we when we have learned to behold the Infinite One behind the clouds which veil Him, and wherein He seems to hide Himself. I should like to spend months here instead of two or three weeks. Yet, after all, even in these few weeks, God will give me the inspiriting draught which He bestows on them who seek Him in solitude, far from men.

My sermon on St. Dominic's Day did not fatigue me, but rather the contrary. Truths proclaimed with vehemence serve to strengthen him who proclaims them. Besides, child most dear, have you not suffered for me, have you not prayed?

Various newspapers have referred to it at length, some with praise, others with insults. However, that is as it should be. An apostle must be cursed and blessed, persecuted and acclaimed.

I am engaged in writing several small works. Ideas are moving in my head like a flock of sheep in a rich pasture. I want to write a book on the Restoration of the Study of Philosophy in France. Help me, dear child, by your prayers. Good-bye. I give you my blessing. The sea is smooth, and I am going to plunge into the waves. Good-bye. Yours in Christ.

62

Saint-Brieuc: August 30, 1879.

My Child,—Your letter reached me at Dieppe, just when I was pleading the cause of my *little sea-birds*. My plea, thank God, had considerable success, and the orphan birds will have at any rate a comfortable nest. I am coming to the end of the days of rest granted me in my beloved retreat.

You cannot imagine how charming this little place is, nor the odd life I live here.

The hills clothed with golden corn; the white beach washed twice every day by the salt waves; the blue surface stretching infinitely far; the line of limitless horizon; the inspired silence—a silence unbroken save for the chanting of the waves—calling the soul to contemplation and holy reverie; the simple circumstances of material life—all this is priceless. There is nothing equal to it for energetic natures in need of fresh strength.

On Friday I leave for Paris, where I shall only stay forty-eight hours, because I must be at Flavigny by Monday evening for the commencement of the Retreat.

I have begun an important work here on 'Philosophy and its Revival.' The first idea of it occurred to me in Rome, and it was further developed by Leo XIII.'s recent Encyclical; so here I am committed to a somewhat large undertaking, to which I intend devoting myself until I have completed it. I ask your prayers for this intention; for thus I shall gain light from above, without which no human effort is worthy of life.

Well, my child, grow each day in the goodness and love of Christ. Work without ceasing, and let

the grace of God transform your imperfect nature by means of suffering and sacrifice. Be like the sheep that is *dumb* when led away to the slaughter. To receive encouragement, look upward to the Star which nought can hide; slake your thirst at the river of living water which springeth up to eternal life.

Have your habitation on high where eagles build their nests. You will escape endless trials and the storms of earth will not assail you. Far beneath, you will hear them raging—harmless though grand.

Good-bye, my child. I bless you in Christ.

63

Marseilles: October 13, 1879.

My Child,—I write you these lines from Marseilles, whither I was summoned in haste to a dying man who would receive the last Sacraments from no other hand but mine. He is one whom I converted some time ago, and is now afflicted with a terrible internal disease, and also with a spiritual blindness, so common to sick people, of being unwilling to recognise the face of death which has him in its grip. In a few days all will be over, and yet he does not realise it. His excited imagination dwells upon the future, and there is no future for him. His future is eternity. Pray, dear child, for this soul which is precious to me.

You will receive this letter on St. Theresa's Day. Go forward in confidence. A loyal heart has nothing to fear. The most strained situations relax, and harmony is always the reward of upright souls who go where duty calls them, regardless of what may happen. Live on in your sacrifices to aid me in my

hard life. It is in the order of Providence that you should be entirely devoted to your *poor support*, and that you should shelter him from the unceasing strife which pursues him. I have strong faith in your future. Christ's hand is held over you in tenderness: you need fear nothing beneath that buckler.

Do you know I have seen Mme. T.? She is a woman of high ideals, but, like all women of worth, needs the guidance of someone to whom she can look up. When a woman fails to find such, she loses her way, and her growth is stunted; and the result is that, instead of attaining her promised superiority, she is condemned to mediocrity. It struck me at our first meeting that a reciprocal sympathy existed between our souls—a sympathy, dear child, of which you are not ignorant.

I leave here to-morrow (Tuesday) evening, and shall be in Paris on Wednesday morning. On the following Saturday I must continue my journey to Flavigny, as the meeting of our chapter is fixed for the 20th. Pray, my only child, that God may be with us, and that His will may be unhesitatingly performed. I fear the election will be a difficult affair: the Province is passing through a crisis, and we shall need exceptional wisdom to be true to God's great plans. Goodbye, my child. I leave you with much regret, with a heart too full to find words of expression. Listen attentively and hearken, as though for the Voice from above. I bless you, and am yours in Christ.

64

Le Touvet: April 2, 1880.

My Child,—I lose no time in sending you a remembrance, with my mother's kisses, from the nest

where I am resting awhile. May they come to you like a blessing.

I arrived later than I had anticipated; that is why you will not receive these lines until to-morrow. Le Touvet is not Paris; we have only one mail a day.

Live on your memories, my child, and let hope inspire you. Ascend by degrees the steep peaks where the Spirit broods, whither I unceasingly guide you. I love to behold you encircled with the glory of living sacrifices, walking in the reflected beauty of God.

My mother keeps her old courage, and is not dismayed at the storm which rages round me. The noble soul knows well of what strain I come, and she broods over me with infinite tenderness, and God-given strength.

I have been to see my mountain again: it is magnificent. The spring is just beginning to spread its carpet of early flowers and fresh verdure; the warm breezes are calling to the sap to rise; yet the great mountain-peaks are still clad with snow. They are superbly beautiful, these glaciers and half-frozen masses glittering in the sun like solid blocks and sheets of silver. On my arrival I found your letter written in pencil, my dear little daughter. Keep on writing, but do not ask me if I read it all. Have I not eyes which see all, and ears which hear everything?

I leave this very evening, spending the night at Chambéry, and then swooping down to Rome in a single flight. Watch and pray. We are in Christ; rest there in peace. Do not burn yourself out; rather let the flame mount steadily, for you are an altar and must not be a volcano.

I give you my blessing and tenderest love,

despatching them both on the wings of this wind, which is blowing through my room from the stainless heights of the glacier. Yours in Christ.

65

Rome: April 9, 1880.

My dear Child,—You must be getting anxious, and I am afraid my enforced silence has been a great trial to you. Alas! this letter will bring you no consolation, for I have very bad news to tell you.

I reached Rome only on Thursday, the day before yesterday, and my first step was to report myself to the General of the Order, Father Larocca.

. . . . .

On entering the room I prostrated myself according to the Dominican rule. He rose and embraced me, and then reseated himself in his chair. Standing before him, rather to his left, I opened the conversation by saying, 'Most reverend Father, I have come to receive your orders.'

'Well,' he replied sadly and with evident emotion, 'it is a serious and painful business. You are aware of the unfavourable impression which your addresses have caused. You have taken a wrong direction; you are not an apostle, but a tribune. Far from converting unbelievers, you have but confirmed them in their unbelief. The Gospel spirit is absent from your teaching, and you have compromised the Order by asserting that it shared your views.'

I listened to all this in silence; some irresistible power seemed to bid me hold my peace. I remained some moments in perfect silence, motionless and unperturbed. Then I said to the General, 'Well, most reverend Father, what have I to do?' He

hesitated for a moment and then replied, 'You must retire to a solitary convent at Corbara, in Corsica. You will neither preach nor hear confessions, but devote yourself to prayer and study until further orders.'

'When do you wish me to start?'

'As soon as possible after you have rested.'

'The only request I make, most reverend Father, is that I may be allowed to see the Pope before my departure, and therefore to remain a few days while I wait for my audience with him.' This he granted.

That was the whole of my interview with the Master-General whom God has brought into my life, and who signalises his existence, and his authority over me by a decree of *exile*. I accept with composure, and even with joy, this first great trial which Christ has seen well to permit. I am happy to be judged worthy to suffer for the holy cause to which my life is devoted. It is perhaps the beginning of a long martyrdom; if so, I am ready for all that may come. What matters what happens to me! It is the holy work in which I am engaged, the salvation of modern pagans, which is of importance; no power on earth shall stop me. I shall stay here, dear child, until after my audience—a week at the latest. When I have seen the Holy Father, if he be graciously pleased to receive me, I shall know what to say to the Master-General.

Do you, for your part, pray and suffer in union with your Father. I see no harm in your letting Mme. L. know the substance of this letter. Tell her that I have a son's love for her, and that I bless the dear Gabrielle, who is so fond of you. My blessing with sincerest affection be with you, dear child.

66

Corbara: April 22, 1880.

My dear Child,—Here I am, quite alone, cut off from the sight of my own country, with its savage naked mountains, its sea and sky. . . . Corbara is quite Carthusian, a white sepulchre round which the birds sing as though striving to wake those who sleep within. The apostle is buried; how strange it all is! Fate lays up for us some startling checks. All at once the road ends in a deep abyss. Well, one must follow on down. I do not hesitate, but go straight on without a backward look, striving to hear only the voice of God. Should there be a pit of lions down there, and should God say, Go and live among these beasts, I would go and lay my hand upon their dreadful manes. It is my joy and pride to suffer somewhat, and to sacrifice myself for the holy cause of the salvation of this world of to-day; for I am powerfully drawn to it and have devoted my life to its welfare. I have no wish to be an ordinary talker whose interest is merely academical, an apostle with the lips; but one who suffers, who is tested, a martyr—but have I any right to speak thus? No, it is not for man to be this or that; it is Providence Who chooses us in spite of our unworthiness; it is God, the Ruler of our destinies, Who says to us, Go and perish that Truth and Justice may prevail.

I say all this to you, my child, that your soul may be cheered, and that, knowing my stern destiny, you may share it by self-sacrifice and abnegation. This afflicting phase of my life will be as hard for you as for me. My liberty in correspondence is taken away, so you will be fettered as I am; however—patience.

The winter will pass, the storm of the days of death will be but for an hour. Let us be worthy of the grief God sends.

You must write to me every week and give me news of our dear friends at E. . . . Rely, all of you, on the warrior whom God is sustaining, and pay no heed to the delirious Press, which is waging such a cowardly, disloyal war against me.

As to the indiscretion of the 'Evénement' of which I am suffering the consequences, I look upon it as an additional trial to be borne; but trials increase so fast as to be beyond computation. As a matter of fact, I displayed in it no other feelings than such as are human, appropriate, and dignified, and what is there blameworthy in that? I have submitted; but with me the submission of the Christian shall never be divorced from the self-respect and the dignity of the man. Good-bye, my child. My blessing on my only daughter and upon *our mother*, little Gabrielle, and the faithful 'hand.' Yours in Christ.

67

Corbara: April 26, 1880.

I have just received your letter, my poor child, full of grief and as full of reproach. If you had had full confidence in your Father in spite of all, I think you would have shown more moderation. But you need not fear that I am angry. I compel myself to understand all, that I may be able to excuse all, pardon all. What a heavy thing affliction is! When God says, Visit My servant, it falls upon him with suddenness; implacable as a fierce bird of prey, it has no pity. I am making no complaint of having been selected for suffering; in reality I experience an

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infinite joy. As St. Paul said, 'I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.' I live in spirit with my master, and try to read his great soul in the awful light of the fire of sacrifice. The most cruel suffering I have endured was caused by treason of friends. I heard of it at Leghorn as I was going on board, and lifted my hands to heaven, feeling as though the whole world were crumbling beneath my feet. More cruel still is the suspicion of friends!

In the sobbing psalm which Christ repeated during the hours of His agony, there are these words addressed to God: 'Super me confirmatus est furor tuus: et omnes fluctus tuos induxisti super me.' And what had Christ done? Only good. But we have much to expiate. It is well that the flame devour us and consume our burden of woes. I will make no complaint.

Ah! but the treason of friends, their shiftiness, their suspicion, their doubt, their withdrawal—therein lies real suffering. Those who have never felt that have felt nothing, have never even suffered a scratch. But I make no reckoning of the blows which God deals me; I do not rebel against Him Who is pleased to afflict His servants.

I am fully convinced of the good which will result. More than ever I believe in Christ's empire over modern society. My vocation shines ever more brightly before me; and yet you have allowed yourself, my poor child, to fear lest a creature should think to fight against God. I would take refuge at the Pole, I assure you, rather than sully my honour. They know me very little who take me for a pleaser of men. In His inscrutable providence, God has endued me with the sense of an apostolic destiny, and has retained me, despite my unworthiness

and my faults. There is no power in heaven or earth which can prevail against my destiny and Him.

Let my false friends betray me and compromise me; let the timid leave me; let my enemies rage! Christ will not withdraw from my side. He Who tries the reins and the hearts knows right well that I am His apostle, and that every fibre of my being would cry aloud His name.

After all, what matter to me men and their judgment of me? As St. Paul says, 'I judge not mine own self . . . He that judgeth me is the Lord.' O God, forgive those who harm me; for they know not what they do!

May you continue in peace and in the Faith. Learn that the strength of the afflicted, after God, consists in the unshakable confidence of their friends. Certain letters from friends unwittingly give me more pain than certain letters of insult, of which I receive fifteen or twenty a day. If I were easily disturbed I should lose my head; but I live, thank God, on my inaccessible mountain, and pay no heed to the flood of human opinions. My sole thought is to fulfil the heavy duty which God lays upon me. I shall not grow weary of it, for I have not, nor ever had, any worldly or personal ambition. More than ever I strive to disentangle myself from what is egoistical and vulgar; because I recognise that, in order to sow the seed of the living Faith, there must be in a man something other than logic, literature, and human passions.

To sow the Faith, one must have God Himself, Christ dwelling within. He is the irresistible logic, the glowing poetry, the overmastering passion. Live, my child, conjoined with me in my solitude and in my prayer.

I am grieved to think of you beset by the clamour of the Parisian Press about me. Do not let it vex you; it is dust raised by the wind which must not blind you. I wish I had wings, so that I could fly for a moment to E. and utter just that word or two which would bring you peace.

I think things are quieter now at Paris at the Convent. I have written to Father S., Father M., Father D., and Father Mil. . . . Let them trust me, for do they not know my nature? They should not be discouraged at a little obstacle. During the last days I have often thought about the words of Jesus to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. While Jesus was praying, the tired apostles slept. He came to them and said, 'What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?'

O friends, friends, firm friends, friends firmer than rock, who quail not, doubt not, friends of the living Faith . . . Oh! friends—where are you?

Good-bye, my only daughter. Have faith in your afflicted Father, and become that which I have always desired to see you. My blessing be with you; a loving blessing, too, on the little 'hand,' the little bird which comes out of its cage and hides under your wing. I bless the mother whose heart is so noble and generous, as well as the Lucy, unknown to me, of whom you write. I commit you all to Christ, for Whom I live and suffer.

68

Corbara: May 5, 1880.

My Child,—I wonder where you are, and whether this letter will find you still at E., or whether you have left that hospitable nest into which you were received

by the mother, like one of her own little ones. That is the worst of exile. One hears of things a week after they have happened, and it takes another week to let friends know one's opinion on the subject. This is not a complaint. I have never murmured against God; though I have to bring men to book now and then, it is a different matter in dealing with God, Who is for me the Good Power, Whose designs are not to be grasped by our limited understanding. Thank God, I do not belong to that middle-class race who, in their vanity, term themselves the sons of their own works—a silly way of saying that they are their own fathers. All I desire is to be the adopted son of God after the pattern of Christ, Whose infinite love has gained us this wondrous adoption.

This unexpected withdrawal has been to me a sort of death, for at one bound I left *my earth* and entered into another world. I can imagine almost exactly what passing away means. I hope to issue thence with soul renewed, and it seems to me that when I return to the land of the living it will be like a second incarnation. I have never before prayed as I do now through these quiet, undisturbed hours. I have never experienced such profound concentration; I have never suffered such terrible agony in my inmost being. Never with such vividness have I realised my vocation and destiny, and never have I felt so free from my petty self, so conformed to the ruling will of Christ, my all-in-all.

Not many years are left to me in which to fulfil what God demands: namely, to do my feeble best for the spread of the kingdom of truth and justice which shall rescue man from so many servilities; to save the souls, secretly committed to me by God, of those who need my help. I have no time to waste, not

even hours. So I shall go forward with valour and resolution, regarding nought but my holy task.

Let us free ourselves from what is material and the object of the senses, my child; for all that is illusory. We have to allow our soul full scope, and must therefore soar and not lie huddled up. To soar means to leave the level, to rise even above the loftiest mountain-peaks, to hover in space immense in the bosom of God, measureless, infinite.

I will provide you pasture as God shall inspire me; continue your life. Let us forget self, and become as nothing in presence of the Divine Cause for Whose sake, and to Whom, we offer ourselves in sacrifice.

I spend my solitary days in long meditations, in intense self-concentration, so as to open the gates of my soul to the inpouring of the living Spirit of Christ.

Good-bye. I need not repeat that I am spiritually present with you, and that, if you listen, you will always hear my voice. My affectionate blessing on you, my dear only daughter. Give my kindest regards to Mme. L. and her dear children, not forgetting the little 'hand.'

69

Corbara: May 9, 1880.

My Child,—May the peace of God be with you! Let us disentangle from our lives all that is personal, egoistical, and narrow. Let us realise that we are following the footsteps of Christ in the service of the Father, and therefore willing to devote ourselves to it without ceasing and in all simplicity. God's hand is upon me, striking down and raising up again; sometimes weighing heavily upon me, and again supporting me; manifesting justice and infinite pity. By

its weight I am pinned down on this rock, and unmurmuringly do I submit to the sovereign will. I fear nothing and shall flinch at nothing. My conduct is guided by the unwavering light of a conscience purged from all human interests, and resolved to follow duty only. Fear nothing; God Who is good watches over us. If we are guided thus entirely by conscience we are invincible, impregnable. We can be tortured and martyred, yes; but so much the better. For in this way we are afforded opportunity of satisfying the inexorable justice of God, and of meriting His compassion.

But to belittle us is beyond human power. Neither treason, hatred, nor ferocious hypocrisy is able to accomplish it. I realise myself in God in my unfettered freedom. I know that my vocation and destiny demand my all. I will give all.

Here upon this rock I, too, have heard the voice of Christ, speaking to me as it spoke to the apostle as he lay prone on the road to Damascus. That voice is resistless. I can well understand that a single glance of the Divine Being awed the multitude. After the lapse of two thousand years, man is still moved to his inmost being by the mysterious action, ever fresh, ever victorious, of Him Who alone guides poor human nature to the glorious issues of its destiny.

My exile is sweet to me, my solitude dear. I am in the crucible of God, exposed to mercilessly searching flames.

May all that is not right in me be purged away; may all that is not pure metal be cast forth as worthless slag, and the metal itself be chiselled and shaped. And then let the Eternal Engraver bite in what He chooses: it is His work.

I let my pen run on, my child, at the will of

those thoughts which fill my soul. You can apply all this to yourself; for your higher destiny is to walk in those rugged paths which God is causing me to tread. Do not fear nor tremble at the trials, through which the Spirit of God is leading me. All will end in harmony and peace, and God will be glorified.

I was absolutely ignorant of all that your letter informed me. It is strange and sad, but again I say, what does it matter? An upright and enlightened conscience will fulfil its work in all justice and kindness.

I possess a straightforward and confiding character which makes me the victim of cheats. I am reserved however, and have depths concealed from *all*—spiritual depths I mean. Now, there is a particular Providence for such, and personally I find it revealed in a striking manner.

Whatever the difficulty may be, there is only one principle of action which will extricate you—Duty. Then God is responsible for the result, and He says of His elect: 'They shall tread upon the viper and the adder, and they shall break the jawbones of the lion and the dragon.'

You can tell me all; I am strong enough to bear everything. I only ask one thing of my friends; that is, not to push me forward; also to leave to me both the initiative and the responsibility in matters which are of such vital importance to me.

So far as you are concerned, dear child, you must take rest. I see no reason why you should not prolong your visit a little at Mme. L.'s. Be an additional source of comfort to her; support her in her maternal grief. Wherever you are, remember that you carry Christ with you, and let the living Spirit Who dwells in you shine forth to others.

My poor mother has had some dreadful days to pass through, but she is better now. Dear, brave woman, what a blow it has been to her! She has the true mother's instinct, and has written me a splendid letter, full of tenderness and strength. She possesses the secret of such burning words as fly upwards to God, words which leap from heart to heart. Clasping me to her bosom, she seems to cry to God in her vigorous accents, 'Is it not enough?'

All that I have inherited of her is wholesome and good.

Long live the mothers! My first predestination was to have been borne in a bosom sanctified by virtue. I have never feared life when I have turned my thoughts back to my mother.

And, besides, I have in heaven invisible helpers[1] who watch over me, gentle as the swallows on our homestead roof, terrible as the angels of the flaming sword. I know that I am surrounded on every side; it is one of my personal beliefs. Despite my afflictions, these helpers have not failed me, and in my grief and tribulation I gain more securely than ever their strong and terrible affection.

How sweet a thing it is, my child, to feel oneself delivered up to God, swept onward in the flood of His Spirit!

Strangely enough, it is but two months, or perhaps less, since I said (was it to you?) as I stood in the midst of the battle, 'Oh! that I might escape to the mountain to be alone, far from men and all things—alone with my conscience and my God; face to face with Christ, my past, my future, my eternity.'

It was an aspiration then, and I thought I was giving utterance to a vain desire. God, Who doeth

[1] His father and sisters.

all things well, took me at my word; but before leading me to my desired solitude, to this granite realisation of my ideal, He made me pass through fire and water, blessed be His name!

When you write to A. B. please thank him for his affectionate remembrance of me, and for his sympathy in my troubles. Tell him that I am happy in having done my duty, and that, come what may, by God's help I shall face all sacrifices which my mission may entail.

Good-bye. I commit you to Christ. May He take you as He has taken me, even should it mean that you must share His bitter, bloody agony. The cup is no longer bitter since His lips have touched it. My blessing be with you, my only daughter.

70

Corbara: May 28, 1880.

My Child, my only Daughter,—Kneel down at the feet of Christ, like Mary Magdalene, and with contrite heart hear His voice saying to you, 'Much sin shall be forgiven her, because she has loved much.' I, too, forgive you.

Even *you* have failed to trust me! I had bestowed upon you a divine affection; with persistent striving I had lifted you to a height where your moral beauty could develop by force of sacrifice; I had given you this *unique* proof of a devotion and love which God alone could inspire.

In a moment of madness you have misunderstood it. I might well withdraw, but I do not. I forgive you, and pray Christ to save you. One of these days perhaps, later on, I will tell you the story of my life. You will read its pages and see what God has

written, and what others have wanted to write; then you will bless those invisible powers and the Providence Which protects the simple and sincere in their way.

Christ's hand is upon me, plucking out from my life all that is human. An irresistible power is forcing me upward and onward. I yield to it, having but one desire—the governance of the living and loving Christ.

God perceives the very ground of my heart and sees it well for me, in His infinite mercy, that I should be shaken, broken, purified. He has done well; thanks to Him, I shall not be unworthy of His sovereign irresistible inspiration, but shall go whither He commands. None but He knows the road which I must travel. I have to make clear and to justify a very difficult position. I shall act in accordance with the dictates of my conscience, alert and watchful under the eye of God. What it bids me do that shall I do, heedless of human judgment, whether of friend or foe.

I would not willingly be the cause of the loss of any soul; I hope I have, on the contrary, saved some, and had it not been for my troubles would have saved more. I do not wish to have, in Christ's sight, the eternal destiny of another to carry like a heavy weight, because I have acted without consideration and tact.

That is all I have to say, my child; your own heart must supply the rest.

If you believe in me, go and do what I have said. If you do not, you are free. One day you will come back, wounded and crushed in your turn, to the Christ Whom I would have had you love above all, and Whom I shall persuade you at any cost to love.

As it is, all that I can do is to pray, suffer, and wait.

There is nothing satisfying in life except duty, sacrifice, and love *of* God and *in* God.

I am in my Garden of Gethsemane among the olive-trees, which remind me of those against which the Saviour leaned in His agony. I shall die here perhaps; what matter? Christ has given me His cup to drink; but, I say again, that cup is no longer bitter, since His lips have touched it.

May His Spirit guard you! Be, as I am, in the royal hand of this Christ to Whom I have vowed my life, and for Whom I will fight to my last breath.

Dr. Poucel came with X.: it was a great happiness to see my own countrymen. They are just leaving; X. will be in Paris on Saturday; and this letter, happier than its writer, will find its way into the little deserted drawing-room. I need scarcely say that *my prison is inaccessible.*

May Christ, the loving Crucified One, pardon you as I pardon you in Him; and may I love you, as He does, in the infinite depth of divine love.

71

Corbara: June 22, 1880.

Now listen to me. My answer comes neither from my head nor from my heart; for the head is sometimes too hard and the heart too soft. I reply to you after long, ardent, grievous prayer. I reply with the living Spirit of Christ to Whom I would devote my whole life, and Who works in me with gracious resistless power. That which I am about to write to you must be graven deep upon your heart, must be your source of strength; and, should I be

taken from you, my last testament. I speak to you as I should speak on my death-bed, with one foot in the grave, on the threshold of eternity.

I am convinced that it is your destiny to be God's and Christ's by an act of willing sacrifice. I am certain that the surroundings of the world are bad for you, and that it is absolutely necessary for you to be removed from them until the *woman* in you is dead. I am sure that this refuge at Saint-A. under the charge of M. T. is, just now, the shelter offered you by Providence. I am convinced, my child, that even were I dead, or buried in a remote monastery, your vocation would remain the same. I am convinced also, my only daughter, that in spite of all, you have not lost faith in me. By His ineffable grace God has granted me to be the revealer of His goodness to you.

The evil spirit has attempted to minimise or to distort this revelation in your eyes ; but he will not prevail. You cannot forget that it was I who preserved you from yourself, and presented you to Him to Whom alone—you understand—you must belong.

I am convinced, further, that by Christ's help I shall save you, casting again into the furnace of God the pieces of broken metal. Yes indeed, I shall again subject them to the awful flame which melts and remelts, which reduces and purifies all that it touches until the work of art is produced.

Let men call me a fanatic ; I care nothing ! I speak to you in the name of that resistless Spirit of Christ, Which has enveloped me like ardent flame.

I am convinced, my only daughter, that you must direct your affections above, disentangling them from earth and aught human, and imprinting upon them

that divine character without which, so far from being a help, they will prove a snare and hindrance.

Be firm, therefore; and follow me, if my example can help you.

During these three months I have lived through long years. How could you—even you—entertain so thoughtlessly doubts of me, at the very moment when I lay under God's hand, bruised and scored with the marks of Christ, His stigmata, the mark of His elect? Though all others should condemn and betray me, casting stones at me, yet you, *you* at least, you should have stood forth for me, should have watched over and preserved me uninjured, not only in the estimation of others, but in the depth of your own thoughts.

True, I did not suffer insult there in those hidden depths. But it was in those flying clouds of impressionability which form your storm-centres, my dear child, and which you need to dissipate entirely. We must see to it.

If I began to reckon all the falsehoods and misrepresentations which I have suffered, I should never finish. Besides, these opponents disgust me. Was it possible that you believed, to take only a single instance, that I ever hesitated for a moment between X. and God? You know very well, poor little one, that my vocation is dearer to me than all else, and that I could never kick against the pricks which urge me toward Christ? No, no; you have been led into error, and I hope that they who said such things did so in error.

Have done with all that; take courage, and it will turn to your help. Do not be moved by anything that may be said around you. Do not attempt

to judge, for you would be mistaken about my life. Keep your faith.

If I were merely a man I should have withdrawn from you, and never should you have seen again even my shadow. But I shall not quit you : the Spirit Whom I obey has entrusted you to me, and I shall keep you in Him. Not only do I forgive, but I will forget ; nay, I do forget. Of all these storms, there shall remain not a cloud between you and me. I shall never allude to it again ; it is done away with.

When Providence has marked out a person, he must move upward by a straight course : no stoppages, no zigzags ; a difficult, steep path, a track which leads to the peaks.

As he progresses he is enlightened, his illusions disappear, the scales fall from his eyes, his heart is cheered, his untrammelled conscience directs him, and the Spirit of Christ takes full possession of his reason and will—aye, and of his body also, calming its material instincts and making them a docile instrument, a true vehicle of the Spirit.

Come, rise upward, my child. You will be dazzled by the light of God, and will yield yourself with all your heart to its attraction. Seek not human consolation ; do not say, I want this or that. Christ is what you want. He only can give you the fulness of peace, and can utterly satisfy that hunger for God which I love in you.

As for me, I am but a mediator between you and Him ; and I should be unworthy of this office did I not use every effort to upraise you above everything, in order to give you to God and the living Christ.

Do not think, dear only daughter, that I pity you. The man in me could pity you, but the Spirit

neither ought nor could. And is not your lot a happy one? When someone has been kept as you have, has experienced the love and power of God surrounding him in times of trouble, he is not to be pitied. You are such an one, and the future will reveal to you how much God has loved you.

And now I ask you once more, to let me nurture and cherish in you this ideal, which has been my hope from the first moment my eyes rested upon you.

Yes; go and see your mother. I am in the position of a novice here, not permitted to go out unaccompanied, not allowed to write anything without showing it to the Prior, nor to receive anything until he has examined it. Did you know that?

And yet you could believe, dear child, that I was playing a comedy here; that I was dabbling in some wonderful politics! I can understand these ideas occurring to some people, but that they should find place in your thoughts is simply diabolical. I repeat that without meaning to blame you, however. What is forgotten is forgotten; but in future you must confide in me entirely. At any rate, do assure me that all these things are mere impressions, which do not in the least influence you. If that be so, they are best despised, for impressions do not count in life. What God looks at is the direction of the will and conduct.

Good-bye. There is much more I should like to write, but the Infinite cannot be transferred to writing.

I seem to have found you again after death. Death! Truly I am dead, and such has been the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit that I find myself different in many respects. Life is a series

of transformations, and no transformation is possible without a preceding death. Such is the law for human beings.

I could wish, my child, you shared my transformation, and that the working of God's grace might be accomplished in you as in me.

In spite of everything, I remain, and have continually been, in the unchanging peace of Christ, that peace which passes all understanding. In the midst of my troubles I have been conscious of the ineffable consolation of God. You know that, during Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, we are told that the angels of God came to the Divine Sufferer and strengthened Him. There is the same merciful provision made for us. When God causes us to drink of His cup, He sends us His angels. And now do you abide in peace. I freely forgive and forget. May God also pardon, and may the Saviour's hand rest upon your head, my only, my privileged daughter. I have you before my eyes and I bless you. Have faith.

Yours in the unspeakable affection of those whom Christ has loved, and who have suffered.

. . . . . .

P.S.—You can speak freely about me to M. T. I give you this permission in order to save you pain.

72

Corbara : July 1, 1880.

At last, my poor dear only daughter, I have found you again! My joy is profound and your happiness inexpressible. Everything profound is inexpressible.

See, here is your epitaph : ' Obedientia, fide, et

amore'! (Obedience, Faith, Love). You will obey because you have faith; you have faith because you love. An obedience which is not based upon the whole faith is blind; and it is not possible to have the whole faith except you love.

Obedience has to do with the Father Who has the power; Faith, with the Word Who is wisdom; Love has to do with the Spirit. These are my comments, mysterious and apocalyptic. Write these words, my child, not on paper or parchment, but on your inmost being, where the material is imperishable, where the characters cannot be effaced, the abode of the Spirit. Ah! child, be Christ's and God's before aught else. It is the only order in which our work can be fully carried out: any other beginning is doomed to failure. Be at peace in His presence Who will be our judge. Fear nothing that may happen; let people talk, and pass their judgments while you hold fast your faith, and follow whithersoever the living Spirit of Christ may lead.

You will understand me gradually.

Is it my fault that I am not a little, bright streamlet flowing over white stones, so clear that you can see the bottom?

Is it my fault that sometimes I am a torrent swollen by water-spouts, a lonely mountain lake hemmed in by walls of precipice which cast their shadow over it, darkening its crystal-pure waters?

Again, is it my fault, my daughter, if I am a sea with frowning cliffs whose depths the experienced fishermen, with all their knowledge, have never sounded in certain places?

Live on in peace, I repeat; souls reveal themselves but slowly, and even then only under the brightness and the warm influence of God.

I fear that both you and M. T. will have to suffer on my account; it is useless to disguise it. The trials I endure will not only fail to disarm my adversaries, but will further incite them. Do you know why? Because God has enabled me to bear them with courage. Those whose lives enter into mine will do well to face the fact that they will be tossed by all my storms, partakers of my sorrowful fortune.

So much the better (don't you think so, dear child?) if we have to suffer. And I assure you we *shall*, in every way, and from all sides. I am firmly convinced of this, and hence it is that I derive my certainty of the divine mission to which God has ordained me and those others at present unknown to me.

I am not so foolish as to suppose that our eyes will ever behold the glorious harvest. No, we shall probably be only humble sowers, ploughing up the hard soil of this godless generation, hard, sun-baked soil long unvisited by the rain of heaven, and we shall water the divine seed by our sorrows.

But who will sustain us in this terrible toil? Who sustained Christ? Did even He see His kingdom, or did Paul behold victory?

We are living in days like those of the old Roman Empire, cankered with scepticism and unbelief; but the living Spirit of God is not cankered, and He shall again renew the face of this earth. O my dear child, how sweet it is to me to feel you bowing beneath the breath of the Spirit! If He has come upon you, He may well lay hold of others; if He has conquered you, the wayward, there is every reason He should conquer others.

I could speak whole days and nights on this

subject, which is continually in my mind. What dazzling light has flashed upon my bare rock! How often have I felt, within me and without, the resistless, caressing breath of Christ! How many times, lost in contemplation at my window of an evening at the sight of the sleeping sea and watchful stars, I have said to Christ, If Thou livest, speak to me! And again, Thou Who didst hurl down Paul, strike me!

This is not a mere dream, my child, nor the outcome of an imagination exalted and bemused by my solitude. I assure you I have felt the Spirit of the Master, as plainly as though I had been touching Him at such a moment when, during His earthly life, He said to that young man, 'Follow Me!'

Even the body obeys the divine affluence imparted to the great faculties of the Spirit by Christ Who, all invisible, yet lives and prays. One has positive experience of the eight Beatitudes, feeling and seeing that the poor and unselfish are the happy; that those who mourn possess joy divine; that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are satisfied; that the pure in heart, the gentle, the peacemakers shall see God, do possess the earth, and are the true children of God. One sees and feels that those who are persecuted for Christ's sake, for the sake of truth and righteousness, are to be envied.

Yes, dear child, one sees and feels all that, and one *wishes* to be all that. And why? Because the living Spirit of Christ dwells in one and imparts to one these supernatural emotions, these visions of eternal order, and these wishes which would make the animal man shudder.

I am telling you of the things which cause my heart to overflow; there are multitudes of others

beneath, tossing in my soul like glowing lava within a volcano, which you will guess, and imagine, and fervently pray God to make known to you.

We are now at July 1, but, so far, we are untouched by the Act of March 29. Every day we are anxiously awaiting the decree of expulsion, which no doubt will be applied to Corsica as well as France; so I cannot tell you, my child, what will happen to me next. During the two and a half months which I have spent here, neither my Provincial nor the Master-General has made the least movement. I am like a dead man in his grave. I do not complain; for complaint is unworthy of a man, and especially of a disciple of Christ. However, the Prior of Corbara, whose tact and personal friendliness I have many times experienced, albeit that he is naturally of a reserved disposition, has written to the Master-General to inquire what is to be done with me in the case of expulsion. We have waited twelve days for the answer; he expects it this evening. Do not be anxious: if my lot is to be suddenly changed I shall send you a telegram. I place all in the mighty hands of God; my duty just now seems to consist in silence, recollection, prayer, and suffering.

My life is a combination of that of a Carthusian and a Benedictine. My working day is from fourteen to fifteen hours long, *i.e.* from 5 A.M. to 10 P.M., almost equally divided between study and prayer. I rise at 5, and am in choir from 5.15 to 6 engaged in prayer. At 6 I say my Mass, and at 7 I return to my cell, which I sweep out with great care, as I love order and cleanliness. In fact, a first-rate manservant could not do this interesting work better. At 7.15 I have my coffee, and then I work till 8.30, mostly at my private correspondence.

At 8.30 I go again into choir, say the Office, hear Mass, and return upstairs at 9.30. I work exceedingly hard till dinner at midday, when there is a period of recreation till 1.30. Then I allow myself half an hour's repose, resuming work until 2.30, at which hour comes the Office and prayer till 3.30. Then work till 5, Office from 5 to 6, hard work again from 6 to 8, supper and recreation from 8 to 9, prayer from 9 to 10, and then bed.

This has been my daily life, dear child, for nearly eighty days. Amid all the various trials which I have had to undergo, nothing has disturbed that part of me which is in God.

But what a life!

I have said nothing of my own feelings, for I could not. What I have suffered is not capable of expression. One lives through it, is tortured by it, shudders at it, dies of it. At the proper time it will all burst forth perhaps, like the fire in the heart of the planets, through volcanic rifts. But what does it matter, if the soul be upraised and sanctified?

I shall soon have some photographs of my place of solitude. I will send them to you, dear child, and you will be able to form some idea of the enchanting beauty of my tomb by the pale reproductions of it.

I have written to E. L. telling her to love you. Good-bye. I again express, my dear only daughter, my joy in knowing you to be settled, and again tending towards God. You have chosen the good part, be sure of it; and it shall not be taken away from you. Yours in Christ.

73

Corbara: July 6, 1880.

My dear Child,—Nothing fresh has happened here since the famous June 29. The Jesuits at Bastia were dispersed on the 30th, but the other unauthorised Congregations have been let alone. They are awaiting their hour, and the hour will come. The religious war now begun in our country will not stop at this point. It will end in the separation of Church and State, which seems inevitable, and which, in my opinion, is needlessly dreaded by the majority of the clergy. I do not think we need fear massacres such as happened in 1793. History does not repeat itself. Perhaps there may be, here and there, riots and acts of bloody savagery; but there will be no Terror as at the end of the 18th century, nor another Commune as in 1870.

What seems to me most to be dreaded in all this is the disastrous effect which must result from the lengthened, aggravated, and envenomed struggle between Catholicism and modern society. Political parties have used this antagonism with diabolical cunning to forward their schemes, as they suppose. It is one of the gravest blunders we have made for a century. We shall all suffer loss—the Church, the State, France, the future.

The only safety lies in peace. All such events as these are far from paving the way for it; and we, the poor preachers of peace, the apostles of the great religion which is the source of all progress, whether scientific, social, or political; we who would fain turn swords into crosses and lances into ploughshares, and who assert ourselves to be peacemakers and

hungering after righteousness—even we are very far from peace.

I could, indeed, write whole volumes on this unhappy state of things, the causes which produced it, the remedies to cure it; but I am a dead man. I must silently sleep in my tomb, pouring inaudibly into the ears of God my ardent, repressed desires.

Poor dear child, let us pray and suffer together. Sorrow can become an intoxicating cup, when one drinks from the very chalice which Christ drained to the dregs. It is no longer a mixture of gall, vinegar, and myrrh, but a noble wine giving visions of God.

You want to know how I am; do you not perceive that I am well? When the Spirit of Christ fills a poor human heart, it is impossible for a man to be otherwise than in harmony, peace, life, and consequently, health. True bodily health is spiritual health. Ah, yes, my only daughter, I am well, very well. Without having become sylph-like, I am thinner; I have taken up *three holes* in my leather belt, and have no trouble in buttoning my collar. I often walk up Mount Sant' Angelo, with scarcely more difficulty than the Corsican goats which scamper among the rocks.

I sleep well, and wake refreshed; I eat like the rest at our austere meals, and I feel quite strong. I like this Corsican climate: it is dry, bright, warm, and exhilarating; it does not make one grow stout, but is bracing, yet not over-much. I find it very suitable for work and study. One's head does not get heavy and sleepy, as it does on hot July days in France. Providence has given me a healthful tomb. The corpse keeps.

And what good hours of prayer and study I have,

my child! As I have already told you, I have a fourteen hours' day at least, . . . and that has been going on for nearly three months.

But do not be afraid, my only daughter, that I am oppressed by the monotony of my life. Is not the living Christ with me in the desert? Do you think a man lacks aught who is visited by His Spirit? At the worst, I, whom you know to be so soldierly, so warlike, such a missioner and spreader of the Gospel —I can live like a Carthusian. I can go and bury myself in one of these monasteries, and speak my thoughts to none save God. I can do it in full consciousness, in perfect tranquillity. I can do it, not because I am a man of strong will, but because Christ is my strength. Who will take *Him* from me?

The only dreadful thing to me is that souls should perish which I might save. Even now, my child, I am horribly oppressed from time to time by the thought of the *awful deluge* sweeping away multitudes of souls of my countrymen. And here am I, captive, *bound by the Spirit*, helplessly looking on at this shipwreck, within sound of the cries of despair.

This is part of the sufferings of an apostle. Think of it as you read these lines, and ask yourself how I can, nevertheless, abound in joy in my tribulation. Even so, I am happy.

It seems to me that, *though bound by the Spirit*, I am still active in the Spirit. My desires are still unbroken and fierce. I hold my peace and pray. I remain motionless, but I love; and nothing shall pluck from my soul the absolute conviction that great desires, silent sufferings, blood-marked prayers, are all availing with God.

And it is sweet besides to yield oneself without

reserve to the Spirit of Christ. Guided by Him I gladly renounce my human ambition. Fame means little to me; I have no desire to play my glittering little part in the human drama.

To be misunderstood gives me no pain; to be treated with all manner of harshness would seem to me a lot to be envied.

What I have just written, dear child, has not been written without a pang; for I am ill accustomed to reveal the depths of my heart even to my friends. I am of a certain strange *bashfulness* of temperament in such matters. I very rarely display my *inward* side entirely, but leave it to be guessed. It must be some strange wave of feeling which causes me to write thus to you to-day.

You will read these lines at your mother's: may they give you the guidance and additional impetus you will need during your visit at home.

In accordance with your wish, I have written to thank Mme. Meynard de Franc for all her kindness to you. It appears to me, dear child, that Providence visibly favours you, and makes plain to you by striking manifestations the path your feet should tread. Tell your Sister E. L. that her letter, inclosed in yours, gave me the greatest pleasure. She knows full well that whenever she needs a helping wing I shall be within call. Another day I will tell you about my literary work, which will interest you. I love it because it arms me for future battles. You see *the soldier* in me peeps out through the dreamer and philosopher. I am returning you A. K.'s letter. I do not see any harm in what you wrote to him. But do not deceive yourself, my poor dear child. Unless you are such a transfigured being as St. Catherine of Sienna, you will not be able to revive the Christ in

that good patriarch! I am afraid Christ never lived in him at all.

Good-bye. I give my blessing with an exile's affection, and my love in Christ to my only daughter.

74

Corbara: July 18, 1880.

My dear Child,—You will receive these lines on St. Mary Magdalene's Day; may they be welcome to you, bringing with them an odour of eternity!

I never fail to be affected by the remembrance of that remarkable woman, transformed by Jesus and made by Him one of the immortal types of our poor humanity.

There are some sorrowful destinies in life; no one chooses his own path. An overruling power tells you, for instance, to go straight on, and you go. You find the road cut by apparently bottomless abysses; you descend and continue your road. There appear wild beasts, sirens, sphinxes, creatures venomous and crawling; you go right on. Your hands are torn on the sharp rocks as you climb the steep mountain-side, but still on, and ever onward, you go. You must endure misconstruction and contempt. The power which moves you does not suffer a moment's delay; you follow the destiny laid upon you. What a strange, sublime mystery it is, my child! And happy are they who are thus impelled. They would not exchange their martyrdom for the highest joys; their Calvary is more gladsome to them than many victories. An infinite Love protects them, fulfils them, keeps them; why then should they refuse the cup which Christ drained to the dregs?

I joy to think that I share in a small degree my

only Master's sufferings, and I take comfort in the hope that my share will even be greater and more bitter.

Let us lose no time, dear child, but let us still keep growing in life amid pain and sacrifice. We must work and march forward while the light shines; for when night is come and death is at hand, it is too late.

Do you know what I am going to ask you to do? It is, to exercise self-mastery. I want the great work at which I am engaged in you to be the starting point of a period of solid progress. To put it briefly, I want your *terrible impressionability* to be definitely conquered, brought into captivity by a will wholly surrendered to the Spirit of Christ.

I want the spring time of your ardent nature, dear only daughter, to begin to show signs of an approaching season of fruitage; I want you to assume the robust character of the strong who do not suffer themselves to be deflected by gusts of feeling; but who move with solidity and purpose, according to the dictates of their will reinforced by God. The gamut of feeling in you is of peculiarly extended range and power. You mount upwards to the celestial, or hurl yourself downwards to the earthly, with equal energy.

Cease this violent movement, child. It is not the soul, but its cloak that you are occupied with; not its *substance*, but its atmosphere.

Give no heed henceforth to the cloak or the atmosphere, but take care of the soul itself, the substance. Will-power, resolution, liberty, thought, power in the service of the Spirit, all these are included in *soul*. Stand firm henceforth in a single will, an unchanging resolution, a liberty which has control of all feeling, a definite cast of thought, a conscience ever quickened by the Spirit. Be my true daughter

not only by affection, but by similarity of suffering; with the same sorrows, the same virtues, the same sacrifices, the same work brought to triumphant completion through much tribulation.

We kept my poor Fête of St. Henry all the same, in spite of separation, trials, and exile. Absent in body, our spirits were united in the Spirit.

Who would have said last year on July 15 that I should keep the next St. Henry's Day on this rock, under the fierce sun of Corsica, far from all my friends? Who would have said that between these two dates so many storms would pass over me? But such are the unforeseen events of life.

I regret nothing and complain of nothing. I adore the living Christ, Who is leading me, for His goodness and righteousness, for His mercy, still more for His severity. The opposing winds may howl as they will; I sleep in the bottom of the boat—that poor little boat whose helm is in the hand of God.

On St. Henry's Day, under the starlight which I love so much, I fell into a very ecstasy of prayer. Never in the whole of my spiritual consciousness have I experienced such an outpouring of the Spirit. How truth illumines the soul at such moments! How attractive goodness is! How trivial is earth, how one realises immortality! How one hungers and thirsts after that which passes not away, which is eternal! How visible Christ becomes as the human atom grasps the sense of his own nothingness, his helplessness and lack of worth! How one rids himself of his petty personality; his ambitions melting away at the sight of the Infinite, the very conception of which staggers his soul! How one longs to die!

What, after all, are these few years of active

life? I am forty years old; perhaps I have still ten or twenty years of struggle before me. Then, like an aged, worn athlete, I shall fall in the arena before the lions who will have finished with me, before the wild beasts who will bestow a parting stroke upon me.

Will it be worth while to have lived, struggled, and suffered? Were it not that Christ said, Yes, I should bury myself in complete seclusion and set about dying. But no; I have yet to save some who are strayed. I have to cry aloud to this perishing generation, and to preach the Gospel to publicans. This modern society needs must see with its own eyes one of its own flesh and blood standing true to Christ in all sincerity; worldlings without faith must be brought into relations with believers who are behind the times, so that the former may regain God and the latter take up a position in the vanguard of human progress.

Yes, my child, this great work has to be done; and I only live for the hope that God may suffer me to take a share in its accomplishment.

Did you enjoy yourself well at your mother's? Have you had a good rest? Did you get my last letter on St. Henry's Day? We must make haste, dear child; the days are few and the work long.

You ask me, my child, What is the meaning of a 'clerical'? I dislike these party names which have no definite meaning, and are capable of being widened or narrowed to any extent. It is a word odious alike to the clergy and to those who support them.

At the present time, it is the designation of the political party which makes use of religion for the purpose of opposing what are termed modern institutions. Accordingly, we who are far from opposing

modern institutions because they are either Liberal, Republican, or Democratic; but, on the contrary, are trying to establish harmony between religion on one side and an upright Government, whether Republican, Liberal, or Democratic, on the other—we, I say, cannot possibly be clericals. But if the meaning of this elastic term be enlarged so as to include those who are Catholics—who believe in Christ, and in God, and in authority—then you must term clericals, not only Catholics and Protestants, but also Deists; even M. Gambetta, in that case, will be a clerical, because he believes in authority for and against Messieurs Rochefort and Turquet.

As to the question of the military law being applied to all without distinction, even to young men preparing for the priesthood, I think it is pushing equality to the extreme of brutality, and that it will not be for the benefit of the religious vocation. Of course, those who successfully pass through it will be the stronger for the trial. He who has a true vocation can pass through fire without being scorched, but the number of such is small indeed. The majority need to be sheltered, cultivated, chosen, set apart; they are not capable of influencing their surroundings to the degree of changing them. Therefore we have *ecclesiastical schools*. They have the disadvantage of lacking the conditions under which vocations are tested. But, taking all into consideration, I have no doubt in my own mind that the military law will do more harm to the clergy than the present schools, with all their serious faults and weaknesses.

If the Government had a broad and deep conception of what a prosperous nation should be, it would recognise that a body of clergy, intelligent, well

educated, charitable, and evangelistic, is one of the best guarantees of national prosperity, and it would do its best to further the formation of such a body. Unfortunately it has only had the spectacle of a hostile and defiant clergy which has entered the arena of politics, and is engaged in secret opposition and intrigue ; and therefore the Government does all it can to check, harass, and at last expel it.

Ah, how easily a courageous Minister could rally the clergy round him ! But this tone of antagonism has been set, and is not to be easily corrected. It is impossible to say what will be the end of it for Church and State.

Well, here am I talking politics, which is surely somewhat out of place for a dead man !

I am writing by this mail to the dear new sister whom God has given you. It is a nature worth cultivating, suited to co-operate in the great work. Good-bye, my child, my only daughter. I shall say the Holy Mass for you on St. Mary Magdalene's Day. Tell E. that she shall share too. I give you my blessing in the infinite affection of Christ.

75

Corbara : July 24, 1880.

To Two Friends.

My dear Children,—I have just received the precious little box, for which I wish to thank you. To an exile how delightful is anything that comes from his own country ! Do you recognise the mauve ink ? What eloquent words could be written with it ! I have only just come to the bottom of the box and discovered the beautiful Jeanne d'Arc. As soon

as I saw her my iconoclastic rage fled, and I loved this virgin armed with infinite gentleness, and the sword which in her hands became a cross. I loved, too, her golden voice, which says also to me, 'Obey, believe, love.'

This noble motto sums up all life; may we make it ours.

I am writing these lines before the statue, which will henceforth share my banishment and the hardships of my soldier life.

How I loved, too, the sprig of honeysuckle, the flower of love. It was buried under the immortelles, the flower of the grave. Love which wants to live must be crucified. Eden is not of this world. We have been tossed on to this planet, so nearly covered by bitter waters, that we should strive and suffer and love even in death. Let us be faithful to our harsh destiny. The greatest are they who have most loved; they who have loved most have suffered most; and how strange it is that those who have suffered most in Christ are the happiest. My dear daughters, you have already been initiated into this; especially you, my only daughter, will understand this, and to you the riddle will be plain. Good-bye. Thank you. I bless you, and love you in Christ.

76

Corbara: July 28, 1880.

My Child,—Ever since I was marked out for suffering, I have purposed to live in close touch with eternity. I do not live from day to day, saying to myself, To-morrow for the fight, or for the fatherland, or for the victory. No, I say instead, To-morrow for God, Christ, and eternity. I love this

close horizon: it is good and wholesome to learn to die, and it is the true philosophy. I am taught by the living Spirit of Christ, pierced through by His consuming brightness, which sets free in us the divine and immortal by withering that which is earthly. If it were said to me, To-morrow, my friend, you will be laid in the grave, I should make no struggle, but should feel only a keen longing for the Christ to Whom I have devoted my life, and Whom I would fain behold.

One joy is still left me in my banishment. Apostle still and in spite of all, I cannot fail to be a source of light, radiating brilliance in every direction, according to the will of the Spirit: awakening the sleepers, supporting the weak, recalling the wandering, raising the fallen.

You need, dear child, the full grace of Christ. Give yourself to Him and hold fast my hand which leads you to Him. Give yourself without reserve, for therein shall consist your beauty. This is the only object of my connection with your life.

Never forget that we are surrounded by good and evil spirits, tossed by countless storms, caressed by countless gleams of light, and shattered by countless explosions and fires both of heaven and earth. The will, all dismayed by the tumult, rests motionless; but presently feeling passes away, and the will stands relieved. The outline of the soul is subject to change; the Spirit is unchangeable. Now God, my child, reckons nought but the soul and the Spirit.

The fuller the outpouring of the Spirit, the more glorious He is seen to be; the more He bestows Himself, the more He abounds. His fruitfulness leaves untouched His virginity. He comes freely into every soul which invites Him, adapting His

power in a wonderful fashion to the needs of the individual who receives Him.

O living Spirit of Christ, it is Thou Who livest in our very veins, transforming us and filling us with joy. Without Thee we are overwhelmed by carnal brutishness: our only worth is Thy grace.

Ah! if you could but forget self. If you could say with sincerity, I have ceased to be; I am no longer I. The world passes me by; so much the better. I am persecuted; very good. I am treated with contempt; it is well.

Ah! if only this dear child of mine could forget self! Whenever that happened my work would be finished. I could say to Christ, Behold an image worthy of Thee; have mercy on the sculptor.

What you tell me of Mme. Meynard de Franc's motherly kindness to you touches me deeply; please thank her for me.

In another letter I will tell you what I think of a separation of Church and State, also about my literary work and the books you should read.

Good-bye. My fullest blessing on you, my only daughter.

77

Corbara: August 4, 1880.

My dear Child,—To-day is the 4th. This morning as I offered the Holy Sacrifice for you I was brought into deep ineffable communion with your spirit. It is a glorious but terrible thing to be chosen to present such noble souls to Christ. What a record of blood and tears, of unknown, mysterious, awful sacrifices! If one thought but of his own personal interests, he would never devote himself to such works; but man is not master of his destiny. He goes whither he is

driven by the Spirit, accepting death as gaily as an invitation to a banquet.

Oh! sacrifice yourself. You are still the slave of your feelings; you are guided by them instead of ruling them. Until you have subdued them, my only daughter, you will remain but a child; you will not become the strong and gentle woman that I wish you to become. You are not yet born—can you understand that?

Being born to the life of freedom means success in ridding the will of encumbering passions; being born to the life of God means success in ridding the Spirit of one's will.

Passion is a brute beast only fit for slavery. Will is the man himself, who must abdicate his throne. The Spirit is God in us: He must reign.

It is then that the high joys, the deep harmonies, are revealed; earth takes the aspect of a gloomy tent wherein the Spirit groans, and heaven appears as the happy shore where all our anticipations shall be realised more fully than we could ever dream.

Souls which are growing pass from phase to phase, and each moral transformation is preceded by a death. The higher it rises, the more painful is the death; but each new-birth is accompanied with unspeakable joys bestowed and conceived of by the Spirit alone.

Now I want you to understand once for all, my dear child, this principle of my inner life. Never since the beginning of my conscious existence have I formed an attachment to any human being but that the bond between us was God; never have I been captivated by what is material; never have I found satisfaction in anything created.

Where my heart has rested, thither I have invoked

the Infinite One; and since I am no mere religious dreamer satisfied with abstract infinity, I have always placed Christ between me and those I love. And because I have always reckoned myself above all a workman for God, an apostle for Christ, called to reveal Him to my country and my generation, I have always made those I love partners in my calling and my life.

In that lies the secret of my deep affection; all else is mere detail to which I do not give a moment's notice. As an artist, I have always been an admirer of form. Revelling in light, I have always been attracted by beauty, yet not from its earthly side, but by the reflection of immortality which I perceived in it. Hungry for God, I have ever *seen and imaged* Him in all that I have loved. I do not deny I have made mistakes, for to image God through man is not within human power.

However that may be, the object of my love has existed only in my eyes because of God, Who dwelt therein; because of Christ, Who radiantly looked forth; because of the help afforded me in the fulfilment of a calling beyond measure devoted, and assisted beyond expectation.

Whenever it has happened that those whom I have loved have fallen away from God and ceased to love Christ, when instead of helping me in my calling they have hindered, they have ceased to exist. God's hour has always come, implacable and irresistible. I have never sought to oppose the movement of His supreme righteousness; and even as I lay crushed beneath it I have ever found His mercy.

Now you know, my only daughter, what you wanted to know.

So you have received the photographs, and can therefore form some idea of my solitary tomb. You see where I am buried and what a splendid memorial Mt. Sant' Angelo makes. It is of massive granite, much weatherworn, and I ascend it at least once a week, accompanied by one of the Fathers. I love being there : the air is more bracing, the view wider, the silence more intense, the solitude more absolute. The ascent recuperates me after long hours of study : it refreshes my brain and allows my spirit wider scope. I usually stay an hour or two according as I have time, beginning to descend when the sun dips into the sea, and when I have had my fill of prayer.

Bodily exercise does me good : I am exceedingly alive and must have active exercise to expend my energy. I come back bathed in perspiration, have a cold bath, and feel much refreshed. Next day I find the tension of my nerves relaxed, my head feels clear, and likewise my spiritual horizon.

How could you imagine that I ever preach at Corbara ? I wonder at your falling into such a misconception. No, I am here not to preach but to die. It is the first rough stage of my Calvary. No one can ever know what I have suffered. And no one can know, either, what marvellous things God has showed me during these long days which His grace has caused to seem short.

My destiny has been made clear to me in its fulness and power, with all its perils and resources, with its obstacles and its means, its inexpressible sorrows and joys.

Good-bye, my only daughter. I have not yet told you about my literary work, but my pen runs at the will of the Spirit. When the Spirit breathes it will

write about it. My blessing be with you. I shelter you in Christ.

78

Corbara : August 11, 1880.

My only Daughter,—I bless the Christ Who loves and saves you. I hope to be a living example to you. What I told you to do, by God's grace I am doing myself. Though my words may be bold, my action, by Christ's help, bears them out.

A few days ago I was reading over the short-hand notes of my last Trinity addresses, and I was struck with the words which formed the conclusion of my strong appeal. I had forgotten them, for what I utter in moments of fiery zeal is not mine, neither remains with me: I am at such times only the vibrating string swept by the breeze. But here they are :—'If a man express himself willing to perform a certain action, and fail to convince those for whose sake he does it that he is ready for any sacrifice compatible with honour and self-respect, he speaks in vain ; for his mere words prove nothing, and are nought but vain sound. But if he show by his actions that he is loyally and sincerely true to superior authority when it exercises its legitimate functions, then I say, gentlemen, he has a right to be listened to and, I may add, to be supported.'

These words, which seem to me a kind of presentiment of the lot awaiting me, might have become my own condemnation. The Spirit of Christ, Who put them into my mouth, is granting me to carry them into practice. He is writing them to-day on the face of this rock beneath whose shadow I dwell.

As for you, my daughter, have no regrets, but rise

upward. Christ stands before us, and however hard our lot, it will not approach to His. It is good and glorious to suffer in like manner with Him Who has loved us.

I do not know what the Master-General said about me in his letter to Father Chocarne. I am not dismayed at the long seclusion which he thinks profitable to me. Indeed, Paul spent *three years* in Arabia, after he had been hurled to the ground on the road to Damascus. Solitude is a *terrible power*. Those who have broad shoulders become athletes. For my part, solitude ravishes me; the spiritual world is my native land. The wide knowledge which comes of study is one of my passions: the thought that from the depth of exile I am giving life to other souls saves my fervent heart from dying of inanition; and the assurance that I have of doing honour to my flag—wrapped in whose folds I hope to lie in eternal sleep—affords me the deepest joy.

And then you know, my only dear daughter, the living Spirit of Christ supplies all my needs. To feel His presence in my inmost being, to feed on Him, to slake my thirst in Him—this passes human speech. What is earth, life, the world? Nought but vanity, corruption, clamour, selfishness, and misery.

The years pass swiftly on to eternity and who knows how long I have to live? Yet I seem to myself to have only just begun my life of apostleship. Surely I have fought a few preliminary battles! Corbara is my desert, where I fast my forty days and forty nights. I have the feeling that, my fast ended, the Spirit will drive me forth and carry me to meet great combats and serious trials.

Live, dear daughter, in communion with me, dwelling in the Spirit, having renounced all that is

earthly. Thus you will become an unspeakable blessing to me.

You must speak sharply to A. to recall him to a better mind. Appeal to his conscience as a man and a Christian. He is married ; therefore let him respect his wife. Though she be unfaithful to him, let him forgive her : though she repulse him, he must suffer it as Christ's disciple. Let him devote himself as a good father to his children. The financial question is difficult, for a wasteful woman is a bottomless pit. He must assert his authority, allowing her so much a month and setting aside a certain sum against her foolish extravagance.

Life is hard, my child ; especially the life of two who should be one, but are not. By dint of putting many virtues into practice, it is possible sometimes to arrive at squaring the moral circle. Happy are they who sacrifice self in so doing.

I inclose an answer to poor little M.'s letter. This soul must live ; you and I shall save it by the help of Christ. Tell E. L. that I send my blessing to her and her children, and pray that she may be wholly Christ's, casting not a glance backward nor to either side.

Good-bye, my only daughter. I bless you with boundless affection.

79

Corbara : August 15, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—How glad I am to know you calm, abiding in God and Christ. The ardent part of your nature is being gathered into God the Infinite. You may well be happy, for I too am happy for your sake.

I should like to have written this in less huddled writing, but I prefer to let my fine nib do as it likes. I write as I feel, and as I enter upon profound subjects my writing becomes at once smaller; so you must guess at what you cannot read. However, by this time you must have learned to decipher my spidery writing, which I admit resembles hieroglyphics.

Well, dear child, we both have to learn to die, but I have more advantages than you in learning it. To know how to die is the crown of knowledge. We are attached to so many things, outside of God and Christ, by a multitude of spreading fibres; whereas we have to reach the simple untrammelled condition of bare self in dependence upon God. Then, even self is no more self, because it has got rid of its essence, viz. its independence, and lies captive bound with chains. It would fain do one thing, and yet does the contrary. It would wander along the shore, but yet puts out to sea; would exalt, but actually debases itself; would be active, but remains passive.

Do you understand this, dear child? Sometimes it makes me shudder.

O Christ! were it not that I have vowed my life to Thee, Who art my first and only love; wert Thou but man devoid of Thy conquering Godhead; had I seen no vision of Thy moral beauty which might link me thus to Thee; O Christ! were it not that I believe in Thee utterly, and that mysterious bewildering powers, too high for me to know, have wrapped me round with loving power to keep me ever Thine, how fiercely would burst forth the tempest both in heart and brain, shattering my life and heaping in ruin all within me and without!

So marvellous, dear child, is the influence of Christ that wolves become meek as lambs and lions learn to

fawn like faithful dogs. There is an end of fierce talons; the bloody tongue humbly learns to lick the beggar's sores.

My favourite study during my exile has always been the divinity of Christ. For three months I have been at it, strengthening in my heart this corner-stone, which supports all my religious convictions. It is history that leads me to the consideration of the unparalleled personality which bears the name of Jesus. I take note of this Being's words, acts, teaching, thoughts, and desires, and the study of these results for me in the clear and logical conviction of His divinity. God once found, all is found. He can speak, I listen. He can command, I obey. Does His teaching surpass my reason? I believe and say, Thus should it be. Except the divine Word towered above my human science, it would be on a level with it. Thus I have studied, and still am deeply studying the paramount question of the Divinity of Jesus. I study it with the records before me, shirking no difficulties and meeting the objections of the most hostile of the critics. I hope soon to gather together a summary of my views. I shall send it you when it is ready, in order to increase your knowledge of Christ and to confirm your faith. But you must understand that, however strong the proofs in matters of spiritual interest, they will never succeed in bringing about conversion. They may appeal to the unbeliever's intellect; they will never touch his heart.

The living Spirit of Christ alone can do that; therefore I do not limit myself, during this time of solitude, to investigating and laying bare the truth, but rather strive after closer communion with the Spirit.

I return your little X.'s letters, my child, and also her portrait. She is of an engaging and most affec-

tionate disposition, intelligent and lively; but impulsive, and likely to become impassioned. Swarms of unrecognised impulses are beginning to stir in her rebellious heart.

You must set yourself at once, my daughter, to inspire her with the sentiment of duty. Now duty is neither pleasure nor love, nor is it love's sacrifice on behalf of another: it is a constraint laid upon the conscience in the name of God, from which no power on earth can set you free. Duty is everything. When you have succeeded with her thus far, you will see what *dose of sacrifice* she is able to take. By her own action she will take her place in the ranks of the heroes—or of the others. But I think there are springs of strength in her character.

As to the mystery of our destiny, my dear child, who can sound its depths? But grasp firmly the thought, that no parallel can be instituted between God the Infinite, and man—matter or spirit—the finite; and that consequently His dealings are inexplicable to our limited understanding. Creation and predestination are alike inexplicable!

We know that God is cognisant of all—even of the actions which the finite is free to perform by virtue of his creation by the Infinite. What is creation? It is a mystery. Again, we know that God is the ultimate cause of all, even of our acts of freewill. How does that square with the undeniable fact of our liberty? I answer again, it is a mystery. It remains only to adore in silence. Good-bye, my only daughter. Make a good Retreat.

Be kind to M. T. and tell her how glad I am of all her motherly affection towards you. My tenderest blessing be with you in Christ.

80

Corbara: August 22, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—Listen to the stern voice of your conscience, and refuse to hear the alluring tones of emotion, which swell sometimes in your ears with entrancing sweetness. It profits the soul nothing to be thus drugged into happiness; rather does it weaken it, making it live in a false world of dreams. Do not waste your strength in this fashion, but reserve it for life's struggles, to enable you to obey the harsh dictates of conscience, and to fufil what duty demands of you in the name of Christ.

I am overjoyed when I hear your conscience speaking in your letters.

You ask me, my dear child, how I am able to yield my will and affections wholly to Christ. It is difficult to say. But they who come to Him are drawn by the Father, for none can come save the Father draw him. Here we approach the deep mystery of predestination into which no human eye can pierce; for it pertains to the secrets of God. One thing I know, that the fever-flood of the affections has never conquered even an infinitesimal part of my soul. I have ever seen what is human to be limited in duration and capacity. My spirit has never found any help in the words of men of surpassing intellect, and my aspirations have soared far above human love. And because I could neither stoop to the material, nor find satisfaction in the human, I have sought for the Infinite. I have found it in Christ, the God-Man; and having found it I have also found my destiny, earthly and heavenly; the determination of my individuality and of my whole life.

The highest evidence of divine affection that I can give you is to transport you into the sphere which I inhabit, where you too will find peace. Your nature is too lofty to be satisfied by what is low-lying, too religious to be filled by what is human. It needs the Infinite, incarnate in Christ. Reach forward to that, dear child, in the assurance of God's love for you, since He has led you to one who is pointing out the true life—the life of those who are crucified. This can only be wrought by Christ, and those in whom His Spirit dwells. Put away, then, from your life the intoxicating cup, and drink deep of the cup of suffering. Nothing of any value is lasting except the patient endurance of suffering. All, all fades save the red flowers of sacrifice.

Flowers? You ask for flowers from Mt. Sant' Angelo? It is a rock of bare granite.

Ask me for no flowers save those which never fade.

As often as I ascend my beloved peak I gather you invisible flowers whose odour gives not madness, but great peace; not languor, rather strength; their scent induces thought, not dreams; it does not lull to sleep, but energises life. Be satisfied, dear child, with these divine flowers; the others are not even worthy to serve as emblems of them.

Learn to endure hardness with your whole heart, and above all, all, all, conquer your impressionability. Get rid of your old habit of acting under the impulse of the moment. Whatever you may be doing, let your motive be the Divine will and aim, never pleasure. Do what you ought to do, not what you would like to do. Even when a duty is pleasant, perform it not because it is pleasant, but because it is right.

This sane habit will bring you in time to the perfect charity of those who go to their death rejoicing, if God bid them die. The higher you advance in this path, the more closely we shall be united; for God will dwell in you, and it is His indwelling presence which brings about the union of souls.

When you receive this letter you will be in the midst of Retreat, and will have seen Father Chocarne. I leave you free to speak to him as it seems good to you. Father Chocarne is a man of elevated character, of perfect sincerity. Good bye, my dear only daughter. Be sure that I remember all your questions; if I do not answer them it is not that I have forgotten, but that I am not disposed to answer them.

How I bless you, dear child!

81

Corbara: September 4, 1880.

No, my dear only daughter, alas! I am not a Jerome, and I am bound to say that neither are you a Paula. We are of the nineteenth century, a time of crisis and of fearful storms; they were of the fourth, when the glories of Christ's halo had not quite vanished. We have to plunge to the bottom of eighteen centuries to lay hold of the vanished God. They could stoop and kiss the earth still warm from His contact; we painfully search the heaped accumulation of rubbish—volcano-cinders and ashes of generations—in hope to discern the foot-marks of the Master. They had the divine flame, we—well, we have just a little spark.

Jerome, the uncouth Dalmatian, the fiery youth intoxicated awhile by pagan Rome, became a lion

tamed at the feet of Christ. What splendid roars he uttered in the wilderness, where in his hermit cave he nurtured the eternal science of God and Christ, and whence flowed that stream of living water welling up from his loving heart, which has satisfied so many souls which thirst for truth and love.

And I am but a poor struggling warrior defending the faith with my body, hemmed in by a world which knows not God. I am a 'modern' in the full sense of the word; a man of my period, nursed on its breast and sharing all its enthusiasms. Nevertheless I am an ingrained believer in Christ; I confess His Godhead, which I perceive through the veil of His crucified flesh. I lay my whole life at His feet like the first believers, those apostles who saw Him with their eyes, touched Him with their hands, heard His very voice, and who have written down for us what He said, and did, and commanded.

Despite my troubles, I seek to save those who are being lost—lost in their thousands. It is a sore grief to me to think of the deluge which is sweeping away people in masses under our very eyes. Sighs of sorrow rend my heart.

Dearest child, be pitiful to this perishing multitude, and may your sacrifices and mine, united together in the love of Christ crucified, so avail that we may have the joy and the honour of saving some of these lost souls.

I am not much surprised to hear that Father Chocarne has muddled matters. There is this excuse for him, that he is absorbed in his anxiety for the future prospects of the Dominicans.

I am glad that you appreciate the merits and various qualities of Father X. I thank God that he has been enabled to help you, and I think that an

interchange of opinions and affection between you and him will be good for you both. I have never had the least doubt of his sympathy, affection, and friendship. Our ideas are the same though our fates are so different. There is nothing militant about the peaceful X., as I used to call him; whereas I was born with cuirass and sword. He is intoxicated with the incense-smoke; I am animated by the smell of powder.

Father X. is by temperament timid, and I am bold. He is scared at the first discharge of artillery which shakes the ground, battering down the enemy's old walls. I am in my element in the drifting clouds of smoke and dust. A combat terrifies him, but only serves to calm me. He is a friend for peaceful days and not for days of storm. I can say it without hesitation; he is a *fair-weather* friend. One has ideas in common and identical views; but when the time comes to issue from the tent, to buckle on a sword and hasten to the fight—brave friends! what has become of you? Do not suppose, my only daughter, that I am vexed with Father X. or anyone else. In these days of virtual burial, as in others less tranquil, God gives me grace to expel from my heart all trace of bitterness.

You must not ask of men more than they can give; nay, more, you must give them all and expect nothing back. When they are kind and devoted you must bless them; when hostile or indifferent you must bless them still. Christ has taught us these grand, chivalric virtues; all we have to do is to follow in His steps.

A friend! Do you know what a friend is? It is one who is always sure of you; for the greatest insult you can offer a man is to doubt him. A

friend is one who asks nothing of you and is ready to give you all. He is like a Newfoundland dog which jumps into the water after you, which flies at the throat of any who attacks you. A friend is one who is clear-sighted and brave enough to tell you that you are wrong; yet great-hearted enough to forgive and forget.

A friend does not fear to *compromise himself* in doing you service; a true friend is a pearl in the bed of the sea. Real friends, where are you? I at least know one such, and can say always: He suffices me.

O beloved Christ, Thou dost not betray! Thou art severe and loving; infinitely kind, Thou correctest and restorest without malice or any bitterness. Thou art far nobler than we, poor little creatures of a day, who dream of immortality but have not yet learned how to love. We mistake our earthly passions for love, and our love of self for the boundless love which is in Thee alone!

My little only daughter, again I repeat: Take care never to believe anything said about me, whoever he or she may be who says it. If there be anything you ought to know, I shall inform you; if not, I shall say nothing. But be well assured that I shall tell you the whole truth in matters concerning my outward and inward life, my preaching, and, in short, my personal relations.

. . . . . .

You had better send your letter direct to Father X. Any cloud which exists between us will disperse of itself. For my part, there is no shadow even of such either in my eyes or heart. I was well aware that X., the man of contemplation, was not a man of battle and storm, and scarcely anticipated that he would aid me in the day of trouble. But what pains me is

that he should not have written me a line of sympathy since the blow fell. He is the only one of the 'old set' who has not done so.

Corbara is my tomb; may I fully die there. If I still wish to live, it is only for the sake of saving storm-beset souls. I want to be a St. Bernard dog and nothing more. If I am not allowed to speak, I shall write. I have no ambition of any kind; I shall not make the least effort to become a success in any direction. It is remarkable how I am convinced more and more that a hard fate is in store for me; that at times I shall be buried beneath the débris of the ruins which even now threaten to fall. No matter; though I perish in the explosion of fire-damp, I shall gladly enter the mine if so be that Christ thereby be glorified and souls of men rescued.

We must try to be nobler than our traducers. What is happening to me now, and will happen, is the necessary result of my own actions. Can you suppose that, after reflection and deep consideration, having prayed to the Trinity as my conscience directed me, I was not aware that the walls were about to fall? 'Be careful, be careful!' Would you say that to the sailor launching his boat in a storm to rescue a shipwrecked man, or to the St. Bernard dog dashing in front of an avalanche?

There are cases when the cry should be, 'Forward in the name of God!' Let the prudent retire; they are cowards.

As to the inefficiency of my sermons and writings, no one, my dear only daughter, recognises it more readily than myself. In spite of what I may do or desire, it will always remain very great.

Good-bye, dear child. Although this letter makes no mention of you it will nevertheless tacitly call you

to offer yourself to Christ, to Whom we both belong. I bless you with all affection.

82

Corbara : September 12, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—You may be quite happy. I sent on your letter to Father X. without delay, and I was careful, for your sake, to pour out for this old friend a glass of the good old vintage of a quarter of a century ago. Ah ! yes, a quarter of a century.

In spite of what I said in my last letter about Father X., I had not the least hesitation about it. It was a pleasure to me to thank him for what he has done for you, and to stretch out a friendly hand. I harbour no unkind feelings against any man ; I bear no malice. If the ties are parted which once bound me to natures which I loved, it is because they have ceased to serve their purpose. It is a matter of course, just as a stricken tree falls at last one day under an unusually strong wind.

In the relations of soul to soul, the ideal plays a great part with me. I have never lived on emotion alone. Wherever I may be I want light ; my deepest affections blossom only in the light. If, therefore, a friend does not participate in my ideals, our friendship soon grows cold ; and if this state be rendered worse by opposition, sometimes it actually dies.

You women are not like this : you live in the affections. You anger one another, you say cutting things, you snap at one another, and then a kiss and a hug, and it is all over.

This could not possibly happen with men. Correspondence of personal convictions is the very

foundation of spiritual fellowship. All that is not based on this corner-stone will fall; and if this stone crumble away, the fabric reared upon it will soon become a heap of ruins.

That is the cause, dear only daughter, which condemns me to witness the break-up of so many old friendships in my life.

There comes a time when my conscience whispers, 'You must act thus, take such a step, follow such a direction.' If this friend or that does not see matters in the same light with myself, he sulks and leaves me. What am I to do? I let them go; for it is better to lose twenty friends than to violate conscience once.

Anyhow, though friends may leave you, God abides. Is not Christ the Only Friend?

I was anxious to explain this fully to you, my child, so that you may understand, once and for all, the profound difference between men and women in their ways of feeling and loving.

I do not know to what extent Father X. and I differ on various points. In any case, my letter will testify to him that I am acting outside and above any personal feeling; and that, while keeping watch upon the critical condition of my affairs, I am following simply and solely the imperative demand of my conscience, and must continue to do so even at the risk of offending my friends.

You see now the importance to me of the great question of the divinity of Jesus: it is my corner-stone. Therefore I am ardently engaged in the study of it; for the last four months it has been the life of my soul and spirit. I have not yet begun to put my own ideas into definite shape, for there are certain works on the subject which I must needs devour

first. The book will be the fruit of my exile, and will, I trust, be of service to more than one soul.

I was much touched by M.'s letter. Please tell her so. The dear child may have full confidence in me. A whole world seems to lie in the depths of her eyes, and I feel sure she is capable of every virtue.

E. L. is exactly as I had supposed: in her letters she reveals her nature, which is characterised by extreme honesty—somewhat crudely expressed.

Good-bye, my dear only daughter. Christ knows the affection which accompanies my blessing.

83

Corbara: September 19, 1880.

I begin to-day, my dear only daughter, my sixth month of exile. How the days fly! How quickly our short life passes, and we die! Is it really worth while to worry and fret as we do on our little earth? It is good to rise above the little trifle we call our life, and to lose ourselves in Him Who is the sole and unique Object of our soul's existence. This is called dying. Happy are they who can die in spirit before dying in reality. Attain this greatest knowledge of all, my dear only daughter. Lay self aside and lose yourself in Christ, Who first laid self aside, and lost Himself, humanly speaking, for us. That, my child, is the great foolishness of the Gospel; yet whosoever does not give up his soul and his life is but a heathen. A sage of the Stoic or Socratic School he may be, but he is not a Christian. For us, our only worth lies in sacrifice, self-denial, pain, martyrdom. Without these divine things all our goodness is but as smoke, all our efforts barren. The reason is simple enough: our only worth in God's

sight is through Christ; and He only avails us by His Death and Passion. The hour has fully come for you, dear child, to be a woman after Christ's pattern. No more minutes must be wasted; lost days must be retrieved. Have courage and enthusiasm! Soldiers are wanted who are ready for any trial, who go to battle as to a feast, who surrender their lives as gaily as if they had thousands to give up. When I think of what God asks of me, of all I should like to do and of all that might be done, I am terrified at the short time we have to live. Do you not see all the shipwrecked folk who are drowning? Are you not horrified at the multitudes, ignorant of Christ, dying without hope, without faith, without love? What a mournful, despairing sight!

I am conscious of intense agonies when, in my inmost being, I speak to Him for Whom I am suffering; to Whom I would offer the glory and adoration of this world which knows Him not. I cry to Him, 'O God Who hast so loved men, why dost Thou let them perish? Are not legions of apostles in Thy service? Send them to these poor, wandering ones. If our sufferings are necessary for the completion of Thine, send us to our Calvary. It is sweet to die for Thee, if by our deaths those who should love Thee are brought more nigh.' Thus I live, my daughter, consumed by the ardour of the apostleship, which is my greatest prize. In spite of all I am happy; for I know that the lot which has fallen unto me is a goodly one. I cry with Paul, the great Apostle, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ.' The more I try to know Him, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God, the more I am conscious of life. He has brought all into subjection

—my independent spirit, my eager heart, my fierce individuality. If I obey others, it is because He has commanded it. This is the hardest of all sacrifices.

We, who are His willing bondservants, neither blaspheming nor rebelling against Him, become as sacrifices. The world knows us not, but God sees us. The Spirit of Christ, Whose bondservants we are, bears witness to us in the most secret recesses of our conscience. This witness is enough. I repeat again and again to you, my dear child: Rise quickly to the highest summit. Do not be led to think that the lofty aspirations which you occasionally feel take the place of robust goodness, or a complete change of heart. They are phenomena which owe more to your imagination, and excess of feeling, than to your own will and the Spirit. You will recognise when your will and the Spirit are in possession of you by genuine deeds of self-sacrifice, either shown outwardly or known only to yourself. When you accept the trials of daily life, when you know how to give up a joy, when you desire nothing but to suffer and to devote yourself to God, then at last you will be able to say, 'My flesh and my spirit rejoice in the living God.'

I see you are working with all your heart at the little occupations of your new life. That is quite right; you need an outlet for your activity, and it is an excellent thing for you to be absorbed in your work. Work, again I say, work. I too am at work, and you must pray Christ to give me light and inspiration from above. I am glad that you have seen little M. Her soul is precious; she is of the stuff of which great-hearted mothers are made, but first she must come into subjection to Christ. There is no virtue to which she could not aspire if once she

placed herself in His hands Who is the Saviour of all. Tell her that I number her amongst my very dear children, and look upon her as one of my family. Good-bye, my gentle only daughter. May my feeble instructions be to you as a burning light. Meditate on them, feed on them. Or rather, look higher to Him Who is our only Master, and without Whom nothing is pure, strong, divine, or eternal. I am yours in Christ, and I bless you with a tenderness multiplied a hundredfold by trials.

84

Corbara : October 3, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—I cannot urge upon you too often that you must rise and you must grow. The time has come for complete self-sacrifice, for unlimited self-immolation.

You must advance towards Christ without looking back. For His sake I trample everything—myself first of all—under foot. Do likewise. I shall not refuse any cup He gives me to drink ; with His help I shall drink it to the dregs, however bitter. Suffering is necessary : we are worth nothing until we have suffered tribulation. How are we to save souls with Christ, if we have not first been buried with Him in His death !

Renunciation must be made of all that is human, all that is earthly, and even of what is lawful. The flesh mars the Spirit ; weakness and death are the result of yielding to its allurements. It is to rest beneath the fatal shade of the upas tree.

Yesterday, when studying various books which are necessary for my work on the divinity of Jesus Christ, I came across a beautifully expressed thought

of Pascal's which I am turning over and over in my mind, and which I write down for you so that you too may think over it. It is a stern, strong thought. Listen: 'It is wrong to cling to me, however gladly and willingly it is done; I should be deceiving any in whom I gave rise to the desire; for *I am not an end to any man, neither can I satisfy him.* Everyday I am nearer death; therefore the object of their love is mortal. If I made men believe a lie, however gently I persuaded them, however gladly they believed it, and however much pleasure their belief gave me, I should be guilty. *So too, if I make people love me, or become attached to me.* However great the gain to me might be, it is my duty to warn them against believing a lie, and to *prevent them from clinging to me*; for their life and all their efforts must be spent in pleasing God or seeking Him.'

Do you understand this robust Christian? You tell me you cannot think of anything to say to me; my only answer is this strong entreaty—the voice of the conscience and the heart. May Christ forgive my past lukewarmness! Let Him bury me alive if so be His will; let Him take the key of my prison; I should bless Him still!

He grants me the contemplation of the infinite treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in Him, and opens my heart to His living Spirit. He is sufficient for me. I call to mind His dealings with me, and my heart is melted at the thought of the wondrous tenderness of His providence.

I have perhaps a few more years to live; I long to finish the work I have to do; to have saved you would be one of the most precious of my labours. Christ constrains me. His almighty Power moves my very foundations. Good-bye. I have confidence

in your courage; above all, I believe in Him, our only Saviour, Who alone loves us as we would be loved.

I bless you tenderly in Him, my only daughter.

85

Corbara: October 10, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—At ten o'clock to-day it will be twenty-four years—nearly a quarter of a century—since I donned my white armour. I tremble as I look back. For what, O Christ! have I done for Thee? Were I to die now, should not I appear before Thee empty-handed? Yet how willingly would I welcome the opportunity of martyrdom for His sake Who has ever been the ruling Sovereign of my life!

Whatever betide, I believe and I love. I believe in Goodness; I love Christ Who, despite my unworthiness, has lovingly called me. I adore Him for the trials He has sent me. I would fain suffer still more, for it is only by sacrifice that this world can be delivered.

Lay firm hold on that. For characters like yours, extraordinarily affectionate and sensitive to a painful degree, the only path of safety lies in complete self-surrender to Christ.

Such people are, of all, most miserable, unless their hungering hearts are satisfied by God, their restless energies subdued to Christ. They pass feverishly from one object of desire to another; fruitlessly seeking, outside of God, that which the Infinite can alone supply. Nothing has power to assuage their burning thirst, for they neglect to resort to Christ for living water.

Do you not know that I recognised it at once

when you first came to me? What has been begun must be carried to its conclusion. Do not worry over all those tales brought to you by people whose lives consist in silliness and empty gossiping. It really is not worth while in the least. Pay no attentian to it. 'There is one thing needful,' says the Master; so let it suffice.

Henceforth I intend to have dealings with no one or nothing from any other standpoint than that of my eternal existence. I keenly realise my highest duties, and am consumed with the desire to finish my life as an apostle. No more delay, no further stop in the courageous ascent of Mount Horeb! Time is passing; the years hurry by; and I would not be taken unaware by Him Who will come like a thief in the night. It is not fear which makes me speak thus. No. Through all my infirmities and dreads I love Him, yes, Him, the Christ; and I know Him better than ever before. I feel that He is calling me to serve Him even unto blood. I will go. I will watch.

Father Chocarne has just written to me as follows: 'Yesterday I received a letter from the Most Reverend the Master-General. He says, "When the decrees are put in force in Corbara you will recall Father Didon to France." Consequently,' resumes Father Chocarne, 'when you are dispersed you will come without further notice to Paris, to No. 222, where I hope still to be living, and we will talk matters over.'

So, dear child, I am to drink the bitter draught to the end. Henceforward, I can neither desire my recall nor rejoice when it comes. It is too hard. May God's will be done! I have no further desire, no other joy.

My long communions with Christ, by virtue of the work in which I am engaged, give me new powers which I did not suspect in myself. I suppose the book will take me a year to finish, and I shall begin nothing else till it is done. I am giving up to it all my energy and passionate force, all the lucidity I am capable of, all the fire I possess. And thus in my exile, I am still performing my apostleship ; for I feel sure that my words will go home to the heart of more than one unbeliever, will touch this godless nation to whom I have devoted my life, and for whose sake I have still so much to suffer.

For I am only at the beginning. This sunny isle with its blue sea and rosy mountains is intended to give me a relish for suffering. So be it ! If God be only with me, I shall go whither He commands—joyfully.

Good-bye, my dear only daughter. Listen to the voice of your Father, who never ceases to pray Christ to make you His. My blessing be with you.

86

Corbara : October 28, 1880.

My dear Child,—Use the power which is of Christ ! May God, Who sacrificed Himself, speak in the depth of your heart. He will persuade you, for none can resist His word. If it were granted you to see Him, even for a moment, to meet the human gaze of His eyes, you would at once turn from mankind and love Him with the love of Mary Magdalene.

What is created man in comparison with Him ? Why cast your heart into a void ? How blinding is that Eternal Light when it shines within us, revealing what we are when apart from Christ and God !

Give place to the austere Spirit of Christ. Fear not, for that imperious Spirit is full of infinite love; the glory of the sufferings which brim over from this cup is full reward of all our sacrifices. See how Providence is watching over you; notice how incessantly it follows you.

Our best years are passing; let us act while we have the light. The hour of darkness approaches when we must cease.

How I long to be spiritually grown up! For a great many years, alas! I have had no one to encourage me in the uplifting of heart and spirit. You may reckon yourself fortunate that faint echoes of eternal tones fall on your ear. Go whither those voices are calling you; look not back; for, as you know, those who look back are unfit for the kingdom of God.

St. Paul forgot what was behind and pressed onward to what was before; let us do likewise. The past is ourselves in our imperfection. The future is ourselves in our possible perfection, our ideal state. The past is the night, and I hate darkness. The future is the day, and I thirst for light.

Forwards then and upwards! is our motto. What is left of life is a mere nothing compared with the tremendous work of our destiny and of our sanctification. Throw open all to the Infinite; dwell in a tower which is only open to the sky. Good-bye, my dear only daughter. With homely affection I give you my blessing.

87

Corbara: November 7, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—Last Friday night I received a telegram from Paris to say that the two monasteries of the metropolis have ceased to exist.

It is indeed sad, for what is to become of the scattered inmates? What is God's will concerning this army of apostles cast out like dust to the four winds? What share will Pity and Justice take in this grievous affliction? Is the tree to be purged only, or smitten in the root?

We need men of God, men of heroic virtue. Nought but a burning sanctity will convert this unbelieving generation.

Here I am still in my tomb, not knowing when I am to be released. I wait the hour in peace and patience, striving to do God's will. It is He Who has cast me in, and He will lift me out when and as He pleases. I am still engaged on my book about Christ; what a vast work I have undertaken! The further I go the more widely the subject extends; but I do not regret that, because the concentration of my thoughts on the Crucified has been of infinite value to me.

Now this is my reply to poor little M.'s letter. You will be able to help her in proportion as you yourself become transformed.

Ah! faith, living faith, if only we could inspire men with it! But that is given to no man. God alone can create, and the spark of faith kindled in a dead soul is a work of creation.

We get the corpse ready, we strive to awaken warmth by our breath; but it lies like marble, cold and rigid, till the Spirit of Christ says to it, 'Arise and walk!'

Good-bye, my dear only daughter, and do not be anxious about me in my exile. If I have to leave suddenly, I will send you a telegram; if not, let us live on in peace.

I send you my blessing and my love in Christ.

88

Corbara: November 14, 1880.

My Child,—I am filled with grief at the sight of this attack made upon the monks in the name of policy and religion, laying low both Dominicans and Jesuits, black robes and white.

I bow before the impenetrable decrees of God. I know not whether this is a judgment to lay us in the dust, or a chastisement to purify us, or may be both a judgment and a chastisement. I vainly question, Why is power given at the present time to the enemies of Christ? Is the destruction they are causing willed or permitted by God?

I haste to strike my breast and ask myself whether I might not have prevented by my words some portion of what has occurred had I been less held by human infirmity, more zealous as an apostle.

May God punish the guilty and have mercy upon us! May He even forgive those who are persecuting us. Men of God, our road is the road to Calvary. There is nought but conflict for us here below; in the hour of trial let us be meek as lambs, after Christ's example; let us not display signs of violence. The reason why the Christians conquered the world is that for three centuries the Christians suffered martyrdom. We must now begin again to bow our necks to the stroke. Down with the false fighters! They put us in the wrong; they know not what spirit they are of.

It is heart-breaking to see how little the Gospel spirit is understood by those who wear its bronze emblem on their breasts. The cross is not a sword, but the very opposite. Those who adore it ought to

remember that the Cross is made for the crucified; evil befall them who wish to use it as a sword!

I pursue my tranquil life upon my rock. So there are no longer any Dominican monasteries in France; the black and white colours fly only on Mt. Sant' Angelo. How strange it all seems!

In the midst of all my trials I remain in perfect peace. I pray, and I offer to God the grief which He alone knows; that is all I can do.

Our words are the merest impotence. I am shamed by the thought of our fruitless vibrations of the air. I repeat: There is nothing good, useful, or true but the virtue of victims buried together with Christ. Moreover, this virtue must be united with His, for everything is valueless—even man's painful sacrifice of himself—unless it be sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Ever fuller and deeper is my communion with Christ. I find that by some strange means my work reveals to me more clearly the figure of the Human Ideal, which God has manifested forth in the Person of His Son. My whole being is moved by this ineffable communion; not the spirit alone, nor yet the reason, nor the submissive will; not my imagination, not an impulsive exaltation of mind, but my very soul.

By this I mean that unit in which all our faculties take their rise, and which is, as it were, the root of our existence in God.

My days of exile pass by undisturbed; I see them elapse with no more anxiety than if I had finished with the things of this world. Life is only worth having when sacrificed to Christ; its sole value consists in being an apprenticeship to death; its only beauty comes from entire self-surrender. Once the

mystery of the Crucified has been grasped, the one object of desire should be to die with Him. A life which has not its Calvary is a punishment from God. The satisfied are to be pitied; we must say, 'Blessed are they who mourn.' The Gospel is divine folly. Oh! why are there so few of God's apostles? The world is dying in soul darkness and cold; why are we not there to enlighten and revive it?

I write to you, my dear only daughter, the thoughts which rise from my soul; may they find the way into yours. Read them not through your emotions and heart, but with your very soul; that is a deeper thing than the heart, and truly divine. You ask me certain questions on burning topics of great importance which are dividing society into two camps. I do not reply to them because I think it wiser not to write upon such subjects.

Good-bye, dear only daughter. I send you my blessing.

89

Corbara: December 7, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—You require of me a star from heaven; I send you a whole constellation. If you stand at your window about nine o'clock at night and look N.N.W., as the sailors say, you will see the mysterious Milky Way. Look well into that luminous forest, and you will find six stars in the shape of a cross arranged thus:—

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At this time of the year, this beautiful constellation sets in exactly the place where the sun dips into

the sea in summer. Every night before I go to bed I stand at my window looking at this mysterious symbol, which ever bears this same meaning in its gleaming eyes—Love and Death. I challenge you, dear daughter, to read in it any other meaning. Look at it, therefore, and understand. Therein is all the meaning of life, all the law of our destiny, all the secret of eternity. The whole mystery of Christ is comprehended in it. Blessed are they who have eyes to see and hearts to understand !

Winter is really a springtime here. The fields are green, the air warm, the sea perfectly blue. I can stand at my window up to ten o'clock and later, in the depth of December, gazing at the sky just as I might in France in summer. Yet although the air is warm, there is no languor in this Corsican climate, nothing which reminds one of Cannes, Nice, or Naples. It is full of vigour ; you feel you are standing on rock. The sun shoots forth his strong rays ; the wind beats with powerful wing ; the sea gleams like burnished metal. Its dreamy blue seems to lie beneath a corslet of steel.

I work on unceasingly without a thought of ambition. The divine science is its own reward, for it satisfies fully, even to the exclusion of desire for the joy of preaching the Gospel. We must show God that He alone suffices us, and that if we aspire to reveal His light to the world it is only for His glory, for the achievement of Christ's work and the salvation of souls ; not by any means for our own vain satisfaction.

You must not be surprised, my dear daughter, at any difficulties of translation you may meet in the Psalms. The Latin of our sacred books is complicated by Hebraisms, by terms of expression, that

is, which have no meaning but in Hebrew. For instance, the expression *homo et homo* has no sense in Latin ; but in Hebrew it stands for a multitude of men.

In a similar way, St. Paul's Epistles are very difficult not only because of Hebraisms and Hellenisms, but also by reason of the profundity of the doctrine, and occasionally of their subtlety of argument. The latter half of the third verse of the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, *et de peccato damnavit in carne* may be rendered 'and God by sin has condemned sin in the flesh.'

Now let us comment on this. Jesus, the Son of God, by His incarnation took the likeness of sinful flesh, since He took flesh capable of suffering and death, which presupposes sin. Now in putting this flesh to death the Jews committed the greatest of sins, and 'by this sin,' permitted by God, God truly condemned the sinful flesh which Christ had assumed. This condemnation is our salvation, because it is the entire satisfaction of eternal justice on God's part, and the proof of entire love on the part of Christ.

Do you understand, dear little pupil ?

You ask me whether I have never thought of translating and commenting upon St. Paul. Alas ! I have thought of that and a great deal besides, but life is short and time is scarce. We must set ourselves limits. Our energies are dissipated by the trifles of life, and the sun begins to set before our intentions have become manly resolutions.

Men's brains are full of ideas, most of which do not develop except in eternity. We take our ideas away with us when we die, clasping our heads in which are locked our best thoughts, all dumb because no opportunity arose of giving them vent. Just now

I am engrossed in my work on Christ, and, as I have told you, it is assuming proportions which affright me. It will take me at least a year to arrange my notes and papers ; but is that too long for the effort to grasp that Figure which dominates all the ages, challenging the intellect of the most inspired and indomitable of seekers ?

When my notes are in order I shall set about reconsidering the whole of the evidence. This will be the most enjoyable part of the work, the most laborious, no doubt, but also the most entrancing. Every now and then an idea relating to my subject becomes fully ripe, and I garner it and lay it up as a golden grain of wheat for the harvest. This life of hard thinking and work, illuminated by the light of God, is my greatest comfort, and it renders my exile happy.

Unfortunately I have at my disposal neither books nor men : no books such as I should like to consult (except two or three indispensable ones which I have had to write for), and no men with whom to exchange ideas. The Fathers are very kind and considerate to me. They are constantly giving me proof of their deference and goodwill, but qualities of the heart alone are incapable of giving expression to thoughts upon weighty points of doctrine.

Tell little M. from me that she is wrong to stir you up to revolt, and ought rather to dispose you to sacrifice.

Do not be an average woman, a woman of the world who spoils all she touches—a woman who first ruins others and then herself. But be a woman of heroic type, a woman liberated from the flesh, taught of Christ in the path of self-surrender.

I say nothing of the duration of my exile, to avoid

being wearisome. Besides, I can truly say I think no more about it. What matters exile or home, life or death, if only Christ be glorified through us?

Good-bye, dear only daughter! Be wholly God's. Dying or living, be true to the glorious constellation which shines down upon us. Yours.

P.S.—The arrangement you suggest for our correspondence, my daughter, has one drawback. I do not receive your letter till four o'clock on Tuesdays, whereas I have to write mine at eight o'clock in the morning of the same day, so that the postman may have it by 4 P.M. Thus I cannot possibly reply to yours. Tuesday suits me very well for writing, so would it not be better for you to choose another day? If your letters reached me on Sundays it would be capital.

90

Corbara: December 21, 1880.

Yes, my dear only daughter, the pansies you sent me are beautiful and full of meaning. They are like two wide-open eyes, rather wistful but eloquent. The little bud rising above the others is an emblem of deep import: it cannot, and must not, unfold its petals except in eternity beneath the warm rays of infinite love.

So you love John the Baptist, and want me to write to you about him. What a pity you are not here by this window which looks over the sea to the limitless horizon! I would explain the Scriptures, opening up to you an horizon far more luminous and wide-stretching than that wherein my eyes and thoughts are wandering. For seven months my mind has been fixed on Christ, my study has been the New Testament. All my straining thoughts, all

my prayers, meditations, and contemplations are directed towards the unique Being to Whom belong more than ever my life, death, and eternity. I seem to have been far from Him before; but now, without flattering myself that I am near, I think His rays fall on me with greater warmth and insistence.

My religious convictions have become simpler and stronger, my knowledge of God more instinctive, more proved by experience. So, if you were here, child, I would speak to you, and you would perforce tremble with joy in the manifestation of the light of God. The living voice is the only fitting vehicle of even an inkling of infinite mysteries; writing is so heavy, slow, and lifeless. Nevertheless let us continue to write, since no other way is granted.

I have always had a strong affection for the great and austere personality of John the Baptist. He is one of the most splendid types of humanity from a religious point of view. Jesus Himself testifies that there was none greater until Messiah appeared. What an office indeed!

It was his to stand at the point of contact of two worlds, being, as it were, a summary of the old and a proclamation of the new. At the time of Christ's appearance all Judæa was expecting some great event; men learned in the Law knew that the day of Israel's salvation drew nigh, and simple upright souls were sure that God was at hand.

It was John the Baptist's glorious function to give powerful expression to this expectation, moving thereby the hearts of the people. As he so fitly puts it, he was the voice crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low. Behold, the

salvation of God!' The greatest men are they who best understand their times and can read without mistake the hour indicated on God's dial. And since there has been no period more solemn than that of the Messiah, no hour since the beginning of time equal to that which saw Christ's coming, you may judge, my child, of that man's greatness who understood better than any the unique importance of that period and that hour. Thus did he prove himself worthy of the title of Forerunner. There is only one actual Being. Christ is 'He Who comes'; all the rest are simply forerunners. Amongst men born of woman previous to the coming of Christ, there is none greater than John. Observe, therefore, his reply to the question, Who art thou? He adopts no other name than that of the Voice announcing Him Who should come.

Now, my child, there are two things a forerunner has to do: to prepare souls to receive Christ, and to describe Christ so that He may be recognised when He comes.

John the Baptist has faithfully depicted the Master in a few strokes. Thus he speaks to the Evangelists: 'He is of heaven and I of earth; I baptize with water only, but He will baptize with the Holy Ghost. He will give the life which I do but prepare you to receive. He is the bridegroom; I am only the friend of the bridegroom. He was before me. He is mightier than I; His shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. He is the Lamb of God Which taketh away the sins of the world.'

But He is terrible too, for as a Thresher He comes: 'His fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor. He will gather the good wheat into His garner, but the chaff—He will burn with

unquenchable fire.' That is how the great Baptist spoke of his Master. In order to complete his work he had to prepare simple hearts, by his convincing eloquence, to accept and recognise the Christ. We find him saying to the publicans, harlots, and soldiers, 'Be just, be kind, repent!' But he quickly recognised insincerity and hypocrisy. To the Pharisees it is: 'O generation of vipers . . . how will ye escape the wrath of God? Ye pride yourselves that ye are the children of Abraham. Children of Abraham indeed! Cannot God raise up such out of the very stones on the brink of Jordan? Repent ye, therefore!'

And to crush their pride and foolish ceremonialism he held up God's threats before their eyes. 'The axe,' he said, 'is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree which beareth not fruit shall be cast into unquenchable fire.' But to those who confessed their sins he administered a baptism of water, as a sign and symbol of inward cleansing.

Now this, dear child, is the model of the duties of all apostles, all forerunners. All we can do is to prepare men's souls by exhortation; now by threat, now by persuasion. But we do not impart power, we do not baptize with the Holy Ghost; these come of themselves. If we have them, we cannot impart them to others; we can only pray that they may be given, for the Spirit is in the gift of none save Himself. For this reason when you say that I am your strength, I deny it and say, like John the Baptist, 'No, I am not the Messiah.' I am the voice which proclaims Him, the forerunner preparing His way. Any other reply than that would be derogatory to my calling. Now, a forerunner should be austere; he needs a desert; his food must consist of wild

honey ; he must turn away from all that allures physically. No softness of any kind for him ; though girt with a garment of camel's hair his inspired figure is indeed sublime. See, too, his indifference to human consideration, mercilessly scourging the mighty of this world with loud reproaches of their vices and crimes, shouting his formidable *non licet*—it is not lawful, when they violate God's laws. Finally they put him to death, but every detail of his great career (I envy it) is full of vivid energy—even that head smitten off by the sword and borne aloft on a silver dish into the mad merriment of a royal debauch.

You will understand, dear child, what my little homily is intended to convey.

Do not be anxious on my account. May God's will, not ours, be done. Follow my brave mother's example who bears her son's exile with such cheerful courage. This is what she says to me: 'My only dear one, God always receives those who throw themselves into His arms. Be patient!'

For my part, I shall not lift a finger nor utter a word to get free unless it is clearly shown to be the will of God that I should do so. Christ is sufficient for me ; I cannot be deprived of Him. No, He is with me, and therefore my tomb is become a living tabernacle.

Your letters arrive at Corbara in the afternoon, and are sometimes a day late if the sea be rough. We must put up with the inevitable delays of correspondence, my dear child, remembering that the sea and exile set us far apart. Good-bye. Keep advancing. If you are Christ's, what matters the rest? I send you my blessing.

91

Corbara: December 26, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—I send you these lines as a New Year's gift, and I expect you will receive them on the last day but one of the year. May they bring you joy, strength, and life. But what am I saying? Man cannot bring joy, strength, and life to a fellow-creature: these are the gifts of God and of His Christ. He is Life, He is Strength, He is Peace. I can only help you *from outside* to place yourself within God's conditions, so that He may descend into your soul and reign there. This is the application of my theory about forerunners which governs all my actions. When you have thoroughly grasped it you will be a living soul, and you will help me in my hard career as I am helping you.

God has been giving me joy beyond words! During my last addresses on the Trinity I touched an honest and upright heart. It was that of a young officer, a rising man, but an unbeliever. Moved by an irresistible impulse he wrote to me, and we exchanged several letters. A short time ago, seeing my opportunity of clinching matters, I wrote to say, 'Come and see me. The faith, like other matters of instruction, cannot be taught by writing. I am expecting to see you.'

He came, and stayed three days with me last week. I preached the Gospel to him very much as I suppose St. Paul did to the heathen in his prison at Rome, and he fell at the feet of Christ exclaiming, 'I see! I know! I believe!' When he said good-bye to me, this manly fellow could not repress his tears, and said in a broken voice, 'Father, I hope my conversion to Christ will be a support and joy to you

here.' He added, 'You can reckon one more Christian, one more disciple, in the number of those who will follow you.'

It has been an unspeakable consolation to me, this ear of wheat ripened by my sufferings under the sun of exile. Those who are downtrodden by men God gathers closer to Himself, and the tender joys found in Him are like those bestowed by a mother.

Alas! how many ears of corn, dear child of mine, fall unheeded to the ground. Poor pagans, how I yearn to offer them in love to God! Pray, dear daughter, for the salvation of many. With chastened love I wish you every blessing. My love to you in Christ.

92

Corbara: December 28, 1880.

My dear only Daughter,—Your letter only reached me on Monday, a whole day late. There has been a storm at sea, and snow is lying on the high mountains of Corsica. After all, postmen are not yet able to fly, but have to traverse land and sea, surmounting a thousand obstacles. It is some help to think of past centuries when steam was unknown. But then feverishness was also unknown.

You must be more calm, dear child. You speak of life and death like a catechumen who has never crossed the threshold of the sanctuary. No, you are not ready for death; the Holy One is not yet sufficiently formed in you.

'What is the object of my life? To whom am I of any use?' I seem to hear you exclaim with bitterness.

Have you not, then, yet learned that we who are called, who have heard the summons from on high,

we who have beheld Christ, are primarily, essentially, sovereignly His?

Our evident destiny is to see God and to attain to eternal beauty in Him; to render to Him the glory and honour due to Him from the predestinate by unending love.

That is the only true end and aim of these hard and painful lives of ours. If you had known this by actual experience, my dear child, you would not have scattered those query-marks which really amount to blasphemy, saying: To whom am I of any use?

You see I say nothing about myself; I will not lie to you by saying: You are of use to me. Christ's place must not be usurped; you were made for Him alone, others are of no account. In God's sight I and the rest are but vanity. When once these deep solemn truths have been apprehended, my only daughter, one begins to see the use of life and to realise the great duty incumbent on every faithful heart. The duty I mean consists in dying to the world; in a whole-hearted conversion to God; in renouncing in will and deed all that keeps us apart from God.

The more complete this conversion is and the more we free ourselves from the tyranny of things created which enslave us in countless ways, so much the more does the living Spirit of Christ possess us. This is not imagination nor a delusive dream; but a real fact which tends to transform our nature, and of which the proof is evident in ourselves. With trembling joy we are conscious of it; in this light we perceive the nothingness of all things, having access to that world invisible which the debased and sensual cannot enter. We learn to control our passions, dying to self day by day; we understand

somewhat of God's will, as it drives us to our Calvary in the footsteps of Christ. Being in communion with eternity we shed round us the Spirit Who fills us; saving the lost; raising up the fallen; awaking again to God through Christ those who are at the point of death; calling the hesitating to choose life. Thus, my only daughter, we glorify God by working continually for the extension of His kingdom; we are of use to all whom we love, because our love's service is to raise them upward to Him Who seeks for them, and for Whom, all unknowing, they pine and thirst.

Think this over in the deep of your conscience, and gather life from it as I do. So doing, you will find that peace unspeakable which no man taketh from you, the serene strength which no obstacle can foil, the firm hope impregnable because its sole object is the growth of the kingdom of Christ.

And then you will enter into truest communion with me. Seek me not on earth, nor in the platonic regions where once I wandered, but which I have now forsaken; seek me on high in the presence of Christ.

My whole existence with all its faculties tends towards Him, and I strive to make my own that phrase of St. Paul's, 'I count all things but loss . . . that I may win Christ.'

Earthly storms indeed sometimes rage, human feelings will burst forth in secret; but the Spirit of Christ is stronger than all physical forces, mightier far than the exploding impulses of the human heart.

Make the full, supreme reversal of your will, dear only daughter, and you shall experience in the depths of your being the truth of what I write. Then

you will be able to take up the burdens of life, forgetful of self; you will diminish your emotional surface, and increase a hundredfold your concentrated powers.

You must not be vexed with me for speaking so often of your emotionability and large surfaces; it is your weak point. Gather inwards the force so often wasted, and you will see what the Spirit will make of you, dear little, unfettered daughter.

This is quite a long sermon, but you know very well that in speaking thus I have been unveiling to you my hidden life in an indirect way. How could I write these things to you if I were not living by them in my inmost depths? And, again, how could I write them to you unless you were capable of understanding them? Do you suppose I could say all this to anyone—even to friends who wear the same habit as myself? I feel a delicacy in speaking of holy things: they dwell deep down in my secret crypts, to which very few have ever been admitted.

You ask me what old M. Midan, who lives in the Corbara monastery, is like. He is a charming man, a follower of Father Besson and Father Lacordaire, whose heart responds to all that is beautiful and exalted: he is a true Christian who would have loved to live at Port Royal. He is exceedingly courteous and kind to me.

He has a garden full of fruit, and occasionally he picks some and brings them to me. He has lovely roses which he presents to me saying, 'Look at these, in the depth of winter too. It is just like spring.' He grows yellow marigolds also, and says as he points them out, 'My mother was so fond of them.' We share the same opinions on the politico-religious

question, and sometimes he calls to see me and chats across the table about the past, when he was young; the present, which has flung me into Corbara; and the future which, as it generally happens with old men, appears to him very dark. His library is of no use to me, as it consists of only about two hundred books, none of which bear upon my subject. But the post makes up for everything, and just when I want a book it is sure to arrive. Good-bye, my child. I cannot thrust you towards Christ; you must yourself help in that. Give this help, then, to the poor exile who sends you his blessing.

93

Corbara: January 4, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—Christ is calling you and has given you a sign. Follow the example of the Magi, who did not hesitate, but journeyed to His light, coming from afar to worship at His cradle. Your hour has long ago rung out.

Have faith, child so dear to me, that faith which lays hold of Christ, disentangling us from self and yielding us to the Person of Christ. Then, indeed, we become new creatures; for, having ceased to live, being dead and buried, it is not we who live, but, as St. Paul says (in sober truth and not by way of image), it is Christ Who lives in us. His Spirit is present within us, personal, active, all-conquering, luminous, penetrating, ardent, consuming, gracious, illimitable. It is He Who leads us, transforms, inspires, and sustains us.

To be conscious of the preciousness of this superhuman reality one must have experienced it.

Nothing in the world can give any idea of it;

earthly love is but a rude symbol of the glowing realities manifested to the soul in the embrace of the Spirit. The predestinate are those who, having drunk of this cup of joy, forthwith despise all other delights. When Christ indeed reveals Himself, man is overwhelmed by the revelation, like Paul on the road to Damascus.

Many of those who repeat Christ's name think that they know Him; yet all they know are the empty formulæ, the sacramental rites, the dead letter. Therefore they are utterly devoid of the radiant Spirit; therefore, too, they fail to gain a single soul to that God Whose lifeless image they exhibit. They speak of Him as of someone who once lived and not as of an existing Being. Their language is frosty or lukewarm: it is colourless, barren, and does not ring true. And that is why Christ is dying out in this generation, my dear only daughter; that is why the swollen flood of mankind knows Him no longer; that is why religion is diminishing everywhere. Oh! it chills me to the bone, it tortures me to behold in the national soul the dying away of God Who is my life, and without Whom the only result of our activity will be to hollow out beneath our own path a very abyss of corruption and despair.

Can it be that it is written above that this century shall elapse before the world again stands abashed before its unknown Christ, Who alone is able to save, enlighten, and upraise it? Perhaps; God's designs are unfathomable. The great drama of religion amidst mankind is gradually evolved through long ages; while we, the actors, live but a few days.

It angers me to see political personages using the altar as a stepping-stone, the cross as a sword, religion

as the instrument of success at the polls. It is one of the degradations of our times. Let such people concern themselves with politics alone, and draw not near to my God! I can quite well understand a man being Monarchist, Imperialist, or Republican, but let him not make use of Christ to involve His name in party quarrels!

All that can be said is this: Christ is in opposition to nothing that is honourable, just, true, and perfect, whatever name it may bear. On the contrary, He is the divine agent of advancement in all things. That being understood, men are free to become upholders of any political system they fancy.

It will be long before this separation of politics from religion is effected, but it will come in time in the nature of things. Not till then will the preaching of the Gospel to an unbelieving world be attended with success.

Meanwhile, dear only daughter, I lay me down to sleep in God, and meditate in my *waking dreams* the lessons given me from on high. I am not wasting my time nor lapsing, as some may imagine, into spiritual lethargy or transcendental mysticism.

I am offering myself up, I am concentrating myself, I am yielding myself to God's influence. I cannot forget that souls, alas! are perishing in thousands, and that I might perhaps be able to save some at least. This thought is my most bitter trial. Yet what has happened has been by the will of God; and so in His sight, for Him, all is well; and for me—all is for the best.

For here I have made my last agreement of alliance with Christ; here, in middle life, I have reviewed my past and made plans of apostolic work for the future; it is here that, lying before God,

captive of His justice and goodness, crushed and bruised yet uplifted, consoled and enlightened—it is here, dear little daughter, that I have been learning to become a humble workman for God.

I am returning you, by the way, the two letters of S. and her friend. Here is good grain indeed! May it spring up in abundance. I perceive in their souls the Spirit of Christ. No, our God is not dead, but fettered and asleep. Let us arouse Him! I bless you, my dearest daughter, and do not cease to pray for you.

94

Corbara: January 11, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—It was, of course, you who wrote such a touching letter to my mother. You have gained a blessing from a woman of unflinching faith, brave and warm-hearted, strong in her unquestioning resignation. She has suffered much during her long life, yet her faith has always upheld her. All that is good in me is an inheritance from her; for the good in a man is not that which he has gained by his own struggles, but what he has received. The active exercise of our will creates nothing; all it does is to translate our divine gifts into action. We could not even will, were it not for the living Spirit of Christ Who breathes into us continually the untiring energy, the joyous enterprise, which finds a strange remuneration even in work and sacrifice.

Father Mercier also wrote an exceedingly kind letter to my dear mother, for which I shall thank him.

Lately there arrived at my mother's house at Le Touvet a box of chocolates accompanied by my card. I suspect that the editor of the 'Année dominicaine' knows quite as much about this delicate attention as

you do. If I am wrong, at all events the *black* journalist may learn by this that our differences of opinion will never affect my heart.

No doubt our poor human brains are largely influenced by our surroundings. A man may do his best to rid himself mentally of the tyranny of his environment; but, in fact, its fatal influence always affects him more or less. This is sad but true.

I am anxious to explain to you, my dear only daughter, once and for all, my *political* and *man-of-the-world* side. I know it scares such good old Conservatives as the father of your little friend U. and other excellent people; it enrages a certain number of Pharisees and troubles the hearts of such delightful persons as that charming little girl whose clever letter you sent me.

I am not a party man and certainly not a politician. I am, or rather try to be, a man of God and an apostle. My single aim is to live in Christ, to keep within me His vivifying Spirit, and jealously to guard the frail vessel which holds it. That, in fact, is my life's work. I hunger after that which passes not away; I yearn for more and more light, whether spiritual or physical; my heart is wholly filled by the divine Ideal to whose beauty it is so keenly alive. In the close intercourse therefore of the Spirit of God Who fills me, I find the true meaning of my destiny; and I ask nothing either from human glory or human love, or from this world which cramps and hinders me.

But, having an expansive soul, I cannot but spread further this higher life, and for this I was born an apostle.

The objects of my interest amid the great human family are the disinherited, the poor who have lost their sole possession of value—God and Christ. I

am moved with compassion for the vast collection of unbelievers: my eyes are ever fixed on them, it is for them I suffer, and it is they to whom I would preach the Gospel. I have less interest in the rest, for they have their shepherds, they have their part in divine gifts; but no man cares for this multitude without God and Christ, and so without faith, without hope. No man speaks to them, there is none to utter saving words of mercy and pardon—no, not one. They blaspheme, and our answer is an anathema; they shake their fists in rage, and we in return flourish the sword. They make a claim for at least their share in the good things of this world and their distribution; we reply that they are madmen, utterly corrupt and unfit for these things, and continue to repeat this incessantly.

These are the facts, my dear child.

Now, if you attempt to speak to an unbeliever on matters of religion, the first difficulty you will find in all cases alike—learned or ignorant, middle-class or poor—is that raised by politics and science. 'Oh indeed!' say they; 'you come to talk to us about a religion which is opposed to political liberty, the Republic, democracy, progress, and science. We will not listen to you.' What should the man of God do in such cases? If he be independent and really in earnest for their welfare, not caring about pleasing men, he will apply himself to this matter first of all, and do his best to convince these unbelievers that they are mistaken. He will set himself to prove that the Catholic religion, so far from being antagonistic in principle to true science, political liberty, republicanism, democracy, and social progress, serves the very purpose of directing these great forces to right conclusions.

That is what I have been doing in the past, and what I shall endeavour to do still better in the future.

And since the best evidence is that of conduct rather than words, I did not remain satisfied with talking. I practically said: 'Look at me. Here am I, a man of the times—perhaps more so than you—strongly attached to science and political liberty, a Republican, a Democrat, a Progressive, and at the same time a believer, an apostle of Christ.'

Do you see my point?

'But,' you may say, 'in acting thus you will not reach the unbelievers in the ranks of the Legitimists and Conservatives.'

My dear child, that is perfectly true, no doubt. But I cannot help that; there must necessarily be some drawbacks. We are not expected to reach all sorts of men. 'Qui trop embrasse, mal étreint.' All of us apostles have our particular groups of men. Think, moreover, of the Primitive Church. At the first spreading of the Gospel, when it began to conquer souls for Christ, the world, religiously speaking, was divided into two parts, Jews and heathen. How were the Apostles inspired to act? Some were chosen to preach the Gospel to the uncircumcised, as St. Paul; others, like St. Peter, were sent to the circumcised. St. Peter converted the Jews, carefully handling their prejudices with regard to the Law of Moses. St. Paul went to the heathen, and had no scruple in proclaiming the absolute removal of Judaism. He was therefore looked upon as an apostate; traps were laid for him, and every kind of obstacle placed in his way, whilst the judaising Christians continued their work in peace.

Paul converted few Jews but he carried Christ

into the very midst of paganism. There has never been a greater apostle than he.

In the present day, my daughter—not that I wish to compare pigmies with giants—there are two classes of men in our country, the reactionary party of the old *régime*, and the Republican democrats, who constitute the party of advance. Both need to be converted. Well, like St. Paul I shall say I am the apostle of the latter-day uncircumcised. Like him, too, I am ready to suffer for my people; but all their efforts will be vain, for they cannot bind the Divine Power Whose unworthy but dauntless instrument I am.

Do you understand now? Tell this to everyone; if the latter-day circumcised are indignant I am exceedingly sorry, but I cannot help it. Goodbye, my only daughter. Henceforth you will understand more thoroughly the hidden work of the Spirit in the soul of your Father who sends you his blessing.

95

Le Touvet: January 24, 1881.

My poor only Daughter,—I cannot write; my heart is breaking, my grief is unutterable. No suffering has been spared me. My poor mother is dead, and I was not there to sustain her in her last hour, to receive her last loving words, and to close her eyes. She is dead!—I did not even see her in her coffin. I arrived on Sunday; she had been buried on Saturday. We all have to pass through terrible moments. The hand of God weighs heavily upon me and crushes me.

My brave mother's death was brought about by my trials; it was my exile that killed her. Unknown

to me she wrote an agonised letter to Father Mercier on January 11. As a result of this letter—so tactful yet so full of repressed grief—Father Chocarne wrote to the Master-General, and he has given me a fortnight's leave of absence. His letter had not reached me before I left. A telegram of an alarming nature caused me to hurry away. Alas! I was not allowed to arrive till all was over—the house empty, the nest cold. No, it was still warmed by my dear one, and by my own wish I slept in the bed where the night before my mother lay waiting for me.

Good-bye. I cannot write more; I could not speak to you, I am choked by my tears. Oh! how I loved my poor mother. May she bless you, my only daughter, by her spiritual love, and may she help me in the trials that await me.

96

Le Touvet: January 26, 1881.

My poor dear only Daughter,—I cannot speak to you yet of her who is dead; I lie crushed beneath the terrible hand of God. My heart is broken; for I worshipped my mother, and the blow has struck home to my inmost being. God alone can strike such blows as these. I share the agonies of Christ beloved Who is sparing me no sufferings. May I hope that others will spare me whom God Himself has stricken? I care not: after this blow nothing can hurt me further.

Ah! I have always been not only mother's son, but mother's child.

What more does Christ demand of me?

Poor brave mother! she died on her feet, without a struggle. She exclaimed, 'Will not God allow me

to see my son once more?' Then, after a pause, she added in a loud voice, 'Well, I have suffered so much—His will be done!' and fell back dead. My poor heroic mother! And to think that I could not kiss her even when she was dead!

Nothing, nothing, nothing is left me but to kneel, and weep, and call to her as she lies in her snow-covered grave.

You cannot imagine me weeping, poor child, yet my sobs are choking me. Nevertheless I feel that my mother's indomitable spirit dwells in me. May my beloved bless you! Good-bye.

97

Le Touvet: January 28, 1881.

My poor only Child,—All I can do is to suffer and pray in silence, striving to realise the close presence of my beloved dead who lives still in the deep of my heart.

I am swallowed up in my grief—I live on it and fain would die of it. God has touched me in those heartstrings which He only has knowledge of; their shuddering vibration is the cruellest pang which martyrs suffer. What matter my sorrows—Corbara and the rest! The stroke of God alone has wounded me; the others, dealt by man, are as nothing compared with this.

I have not asked anyone to come to me—such of my friends who could or would come have done so of themselves.

I want nothing. For grief such as mine there is no consolation; and I feel that, notwithstanding my unshaken faith and my buoyancy, it will take me some time to recover myself.

Christ is at once a terrible and gracious God. His agony was beyond words, and He causes me to taste thereof.

May God have you in His keeping. Please thank Mons. T. for having prayers said for my dear one.

I shall not leave Le Touvet till I have settled my mother's little affairs, and I am expecting a letter from Rome to decide my fate.

I do not care what happens—nothing can increase my pain. God has stricken me, and men cannot add weight to the blow. May Christ be blessed, whatever happen, and may my mother's spirit dwell in me! I bless you.

98

Le Touvet: January 31, 1881.

No, my only daughter, I cannot write—neither write nor speak. Broken hearts are silent. Struck down as by lightning, I can do nought but retire into deep meditation and converse with God Who tries me, and yet makes me feel the presence of my mother's spirit. I live with her, recalling old memories, dwelling upon her virtues, and drawing strength from them. Heroic noble mother! The storms which burst on me wrecked her.

But I still am strong, nay stronger than before, for now I have a second soul. My troubles cannot touch her now, but she will clothe me as with armour against the strokes of fortune. Nothing more do I fear: my heart has received the bitterest thrust of all. None other can be so inwoven in a man's heart as his mother. May she protect and uphold me.

I have heard nothing yet from Rome, but am daily expecting the letter which will decide my

fate for the present. I have no wishes, no choice, whether to live or die; only may God's hand lead me.

If only Christ be glorified I shall be happy; if He be glorified by me I shall be proud.

Good-bye, my only daughter. May my mother's spirit be with you!

Let M. T. and F. L. know of my deep sorrow.

99

Le Touvet: February 2, 1881.

My only Daughter,—I have received the letter from Rome. There is no change in my position: I am ordered by the Master-General to return to Corbara. So when I have finished my business here, I shall go back and bury myself again with my beloved dead. May Christ be glorified by my sufferings. I am entirely wrapped in my grief and nothing can possibly add to it. The *human being* in me says nothing: he walks and goes about his work automatically, as though stunned by the heavy blow of bereavement. God calls me to be brave, and He will give me strength to face every enemy.

My brave mother will peacefully look down from her place in the bosom of God upon the storms which assail me, and will be near at hand to succour me.

She was such a brave woman, and yet her courage, alas! was insufficient to uphold her. When she beheld me surrounded by bitter enemies, she suffered anguish which she never told.

Poor beloved mother, do you see your son now from your place above? Do you understand God's will concerning him?

Well, if my great hopes of apostleship are, after

all, nothing but a great mistake, I pray God to let me lie in the same grave with my mother, or to be buried in the rocky soil of Corbara.

Oh, my poor only daughter, how I suffer! But you must not pity me, but rather love me and pray that Christ may shed His infinite love on me. That is the true consolation. Father Segonzac is with me, and I am expecting Father Mercier. Good-bye. May my mother bless and love you more and better even than I do.

100

Le Touvet: February 5, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—Yesterday my grief revived a hundredfold, and I suffered cruelly. For I gave orders for my mother's coffin to be exhumed and opened. I longed to see her again, in spite of death. I saw her, and sobbing kissed her brow, vainly desiring that my warm love might bring her back to life.

Poor darling mother! She will rest in ground that shall never be touched; a large recumbent stone will cover her. So when I return here I shall find, at any rate, something to remind me of her I loved so well, and to whom I owe all that is good in me.

I shall not leave until the grave is completely finished, which will not be until the end of the month. It is good to be here in the nest still warm with maternal love.

God is sustaining me in my sorrow: His living presence and my mother's spirit are my very life.

I will write later on to M., the dear child unknown to me, and to C. and S., those twin sisters spiritually akin to us. I hope Father Mercier will come. I was deeply touched by his article.

Mme. L. gave me a kind surprise: she sent me a marble crown bearing these words, 'Blessed are they that mourn.' On a little sheet of paper was written, 'From M. M. and M. L. to the mother of their Father.'

May my mother's spirit, dear only daughter, be with you as I am.

101

Le Touvet: February 9, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—Father Mercier and young A. came here yesterday and I was so glad to see them. Alas! it is not possible to be glad when the heart is bleeding. True friends, however, such as adversity reveals are a real source of strength and consolation.

We must be brave and put self aside, dear child. Life is indeed short; nothing in it is permanent save the fruit of our sacrifices.

Father Mercier is obliged to leave to-morrow: he will give you all details which I cannot bear to give.

May my mother, brave even to death, cherish and support you still more than I do.

Yours in deepest grief.

102

Le Touvet: February 20, 1881.

Yesterday, my child, the 19th—just a month since her death—my mother's grave was finished. I wish you could have been here.

In two or three days my duties as a faithful son will be ended, and I shall leave this place, going whither my destiny may guide. Darkness there is indeed in my life, yet only in that part of it which is

visible, for within it is filled with the glory of Christ, to Whom I look more and more.

My principal interest and study in life is the salvation of souls. A. leaves me to-day: he has been very kind and sympathetic. Within the week I shall have left the grave, and shall be on my way back to exile. God gives men the power to ordain that, so I bow to men and adore God. What matter so long as my apostolic calling be rendered more vigorous and fruitful?

Do not give way to sadness, my poor little only daughter, but let my sufferings assuage yours. Good-bye, and may my mother's strong love be with you as it is with me.

103

Le Touvet: 1881.

My only Daughter,—I send you a little locket which my mother used to wear. I think the design inside it is made of my poor sister Laura's hair. I am sure you will value it. Father Mercier will bring you besides my dear mother's pencil-case. Good-bye. May her blessing be with you as mine is.

104

Marseilles: February 27, 1881.

My Child,—I leave the fatherland at nine o'clock to-morrow to return to my duty. God is supporting me and my mother's spirit dwells within me. Fate is hard, yet it matters not if God wills to be glorified by our sufferings.

I have received your letter: be brave, be confident. Life passes away and leaves nothing but the fact of having suffered in a holy cause.

I will write you a longer letter from Corsica.

Good-bye. I send my blessing and my love, and am yours in Christ, my dear only daughter. May my mother shelter you beneath her wing!

105

Corbara: March 3, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—Here I am back again in my tomb which I pray Christ to keep. I stretch myself out at His side in perfect peace, asking nothing save that He may be glorified in me.

It seems to me as though my mother were here, and Mt. Sant' Angelo were her monument. Poor brave mother, she no longer suffers by my hard fate, but, on the contrary, it is she who strengthens and comforts me now.

I had a wretched voyage. As soon as we had left Marseilles I was horribly ill, and remained in my bunk for twenty-two hours, overwhelmed by my poor tossed body. But bodily sufferings are nothing.

The Fathers gave me a most brotherly welcome, and seem to be sorry for me. I hate to be pitied; however hard my fate may be, I would not exchange it for another, because it is awarded me by God. Forward then and upward! Crucifixion awaits those who will to be with Christ. I am going to crucifixion.

In the awful stillness of my solitude all my sufferings lay hold of me at once, and the dreadful nightmare which I have experienced ever since my mother's death triumphs over me pitilessly.

We have to taste suffering, and perhaps it is thereby that we save some of the victims perishing in our midst whom our words have failed to touch.

I intend to resume without delay my life of prayer and study. The grief which howls within me like a stormy sea shall not hinder my work, but rather fructify it.

I pray Christ to keep you, and may my mother bless you better than I can, my poor only daughter.

106

Corbara : March 8, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—You are ever in my thoughts : I am always thinking of you deeply and religiously. I have received your last letter together with poor little M.'s. It is evidently my destiny to succour the shipwrecked, and she gives me the impression of a distressed vessel, driven by a storm far from the stars and far from port.

Poor dear children, how I wish I could save you from these storms and myself bear all that bewilders the mind and breaks the heart. For I, at any rate, am become quite an old pilot by this time ; I can keep cool in a hurricane, and my heart, though bruised, still beats ; but you, my poor children ! . . .

My life goes on, sad but calm. I am buried here with my dead mother, and my only desire is to merit, in union with Christ, the salvation of unbelievers to whom no man is preaching the Gospel.

I am gradually recovering from the shocks of the last six weeks, though they still haunt me. But by the love of Christ I am made partaker of His sufferings, and I know well that the only road for disciples is the road of the Master—blood-stained and bearing the traces of His agony.

Assure M. of my tender affection and tell her I

shall write to her in my next letter to you. And you, my dear only daughter, I commend to the guardianship and love of Christ stronger and more potent than mine, your Father.

107

Corbara : March 15, 1881.

My dear only Daughter, — Your last letter breathed of peace and calm. Have you noticed how your spirit cries out for God in such times of calm ?

It is quite clear to me that you are essentially religious, the daughter of our Heavenly Father, and as Christ says : 'One is your Father, Which is in heaven.'

Individuality, properly understood, has its roots in that direct relation of self to God.

I am glad, my dear child, that you love the great Order of St. Dominic. It is worthy of admiration for the beauty of its rules, the nobility of its government, the respect with which it treats its lowest ranks, as well as for the great men it has produced, doctors and apostles, talent and sanctity.

St. Thomas is a peerless master : he represents Catholic teaching at one of its most glorious periods, when the masterly philosophy of Aristotle was wedded to the great works of the early Fathers, resulting in an increased splendour to the Faith. The only misfortune is that the mediæval scholastic language used by St. Thomas is now a dead language, a vehicle of technical expressions which demand the aid of a special dictionary. However, its very rigidity is not without advantage, for it is precise and mathematical in its accuracy, though responsible for the fact that the greatest Christian doctor has become a hidden fountain at which very few are called to drink.

I think it very foolish to say to a young man or woman, 'Read St. Thomas Aquinas'; you might as well say, 'Read the hieroglyphics on the Great Pyramid.'

It is possible, too, to run into exaggeration. Even St. Thomas is not everything. When you have studied him you perceive his limits, and there are, besides, in our days a multitude of questions which had not arisen in the time of Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas. Science was unknown, history was not studied, there was not even the vaguest notion of textual criticism, and scholars were ignorant of Hebrew and Greek, the original languages of the Bible. And yet they professed to interpret it!

What muddles they made, knowing nothing of the ethnography of races contemporary with or prior to the Jews!

You see, my daughter, the domain of knowledge is immense, vaster even than the intellect of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas is the Vauban of theology. We have to know him just as great soldiers have to know the works of first-rate military authorities. But it would be ridiculous to suppose that, knowing St. Thomas Aquinas, you know everything on the subject. It is like the dear good people who imagine that towns can be protected against modern artillery by fortifications on Vauban's designs.

You asked me to give you a Latin rendering of the following thought: Just as the thorn produces the rose, so man's persecution calls forth the loving-kindness of God. Here is the Latin: 'Sicut rosa e spina oritur, sic e tribulatione suavitas Dei.' The word *tribulatio* seems to me to express adequately 'man's persecution.'

Good-bye, my child. May this thought be found true by you and me. I quite believe in it.

The cruel shocks I have suffered during the last two months have had the moral effect of a rough sea passage upon me. I am still sea-sick, and have not resumed more than half my work. But I suffer and pray more; so all is well.

I bless both you and M. T., commending to God both the mother and the daughter. And do you, my child, make much of your mother's love and mine. Yours affectionately in Christ.

108

Corbara: March 22, 1881.

My dear and only Daughter,—I have not heard from you for a fortnight, and am still waiting for the answer to my last letter but one. What is the reason, faithless child?

I pray continually for you to God Who enlightens, comforts, pardons, and saves.

Be His; let us be His alone. I bless you from the bottom of my heart, and I wait. Yours.

109

Corbara: March 29, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—I am so grieved about what you tell me of poor Mme. Meynard de Franc. I pray earnestly for her—I know she loved you.

We must hope she will pass safely through this terrible crisis, yet what, after all, is life? Is it worth regretting or prolonging? When souls are like ripened fruit, God gathers them; so let us resign ourselves into His hands Who is our Creator and Ruler,

with the single aim to perform our humble task in a noble manner. We do not accomplish here, by any means, all that we aspire to. The greatest and best of us, though aspiring to build the whole edifice, only contribute a stone to it.

God is satisfied with our little, and therefore none of us must disdain his task. You are making yourself unhappy, my daughter, because you cannot be of service to those you love. What a mistake! Surely you know that the best way of being of service to one you love is to sanctify yourself for his sake? And what hinders you from so doing? How did my darling mother manage to be of service to me? Of course she gave me life, and afterwards sheltered me beneath her wing till my eighth year; but after that? I always lived far away from home, seeing her only during two months of the year until I was sixteen. For years, once a month, I had no more than a day or two at a time with her. Yet who in the world has been of greater service to me than she? Ah! indeed she has aided me by her virtues, by her constant prayers and supplications to God for me, by the invisible waves of love spreading from her and passing to the inmost recesses of my heart like a magnetic current.

There is the secret, my only daughter, of being of divine service to those we love. Remember it.

My little daughter, never write such sentences as this: 'I do not believe in the sincerity of anything or the disinterestedness of anyone.' That is wrong. The real truth has been expressed by Jesus when He said, in His glorious perfection and infinite goodness, 'Why callest thou Me good? There is none good save one, that is, God.'

Evidently, absolute transparence or sincerity is to be found in God alone, Who is all Light. Perfect

disinterestedness is solely His attribute Who is self-existing, having need of none. But in proportion as Christ uplifts the soul of a man of goodwill, He renders it transparent and disinterested. Such a soul, naturally dark and selfish, gradually clears and becomes unselfish. That is the result of the working of the living Gospel. Once experience this, my only daughter, and you will never deny it in yourself and in others. Believe others to be good; that is the best means of making them so. Unbelief is hateful and repellent: it recalls a corpse, whereas I have need of living people. Mankind is very weak, and so should be pitied; sometimes it is treacherous, and therefore needs our pardon. After all, Christ acted thus, and what right have we to be more severe than He?

I would willingly reply to all your questions, my interminable interrogator, but I have already told you there are some which I do not care to enlarge upon in writing, and which I only deal with in conversation. When we meet I will tell you more with my own lips. Meanwhile you must rest satisfied with your catechism.

I see no reason against your reading the 'Confessions of St. Augustine'; on the contrary, I think that, under the guidance of the Spirit, you will find in them a fresh source of incentive to good.

As to St. Thomas, my dear daughter, I know of only two of his works which have been translated into French—the 'Catena Aurea,' which is a commentary of the Fathers of the Church, and the 'Summa Theologica.'

I cannot help smiling when I hear women advised to read St. Thomas. Of course a learned woman is as intelligent as a man, but it is not a

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question of intelligence. St. Thomas Aquinas writes not merely in Latin, but in scholastic, that is, in a jargon whose terminology is entirely unknown except to those who have specially been instructed in it. You might as well advise a man who is ignorant of the technical terms used in architecture, to read a classical work on the subject. In both cases a glossary would be necessary. This ought to be made clear to those who are advised to read St. Thomas, as otherwise they can be nothing but 'blagueurs.' This is the only word which expresses what I mean, so I use it in spite of its vulgarity. The fact is that, in certain religious circles at the present time, it is the correct thing to talk about St. Thomas: 'Do you know St. Thomas?' 'Have you read St. Thomas?' 'I have.' 'Do you understand him?' 'He is splendid!' 'Can you tell me what he means by saying, "God is pure action"?' 'Ah! how fine that is, pure action.' 'But how do you explain it?' 'Oh! that can't be explained, it has to be felt.'

O human silliness! surely thou reignest as a tyrant in our poor little brains.

Never mind, dear daughter; we must love this mankind which is so much sillier than it need be, because it does not know how to say, 'I don't know.'

Good-bye, good-bye. I will talk about myself another time; yet what have I to say? My life is buried with Christ; I see and hear Him only.

Spring is bursting all around; the thrushes are whistling delightfully. In the morning they are before us at their prayers, and at night they are still continuing their loving prattle when I am dropping off to sleep.

Once more, good-bye. Tell Madeleine and Cécile I will send them a line in one of your next letters.

With my blessing I commend you lovingly to Christ. Be a sacrifice, gentle yet great.

110

Corbara : April 5, 1881.

My dear, only Daughter,—I received your letter just as I was sending off my last to you. I am so grieved at the loss of dear Mme. Meynard de Franc : she was a great friend of M. T.'s and quite a little mother to you,

It is always so on this earth—deaths, graves, and again deaths and graves. Is it then worth while living here ? And why suffer so much ? These are questions which we are unable to answer. But, turning our gaze on Christ, we see that He suffered and died, and we believe His word that it is thus man enters into the glory of God ; so we follow in His steps, adoring and loving Him, although we do not understand. Blessed are they who love and adore !

We hunger after immortality, light, life, love, and the Infinite ; yet all with which we have to do is dying, dark, cold, transitory, and limited. It is only by means of our hunger, our pain, that we perceive immortality, light, life, love, the Infinite—God.

Blessed are they who hunger !

They shall be filled : it is the word of Him Whom alone I fully believe. The dead are those who are filled : they realise what our hearts ceaselessly desire. I live more with the dead than the living and would fain follow them. I gaze with envy at the slab beneath which my mother sleeps, and wish that God would allow me to sleep at her side, to fly thither where she lives. It is not God's will ;

I must still continue to suffer and to fight without rest or pause. Perhaps, after all, I shall end by burying myself in a real Chartreuse—who knows? Poor only daughter, let us sanctify ourselves in our grief, in sacrifice, in this hourly death to which the Crucified calls us.

I can speak of nothing else to-day; these thoughts pursue me persistently, enfolding me in a happy melancholy which is as good for you as for me.

I intended to tell you about my work on Christ, but I must postpone it till Tuesday. I seem to lack inspiration to write what I wish. Since my mother's death I feel surrounded by the waves of a sea of troubles which drift me here and there, and from which I cannot escape. May my sufferings avail my dear mother's soul as well as yours, dear only daughter, and the other souls which I ought to help to save.

Good-bye. Be strong. I bless you with religious and unending love.

111

Corbara: April 10, 1881.

Yes, my dear only daughter, let us talk of Christ. He is my life; all my powers, all my strength, all my desires centre in Him. My convictions, my moral life, my existence here and in eternity, my affections and my thoughts—He has them all. I wish I could tell you all this with my own lips instead of having to write it.

You ask me for some meditations on His last words. I give them, yet how worthless are our words! He is the one Master, and His teaching should be laid up, not in the head, but in the heart, and should be made the rule of life. Thus one

understands the eternal truth underlying the letter; it is in the light of right conduct that we see into the depths of truth.

I have the deepest respect for the words of the dying, for they always convey a lesson of right conduct. What, then, may we not learn from the words of the dying God-Man, Whose soul remained serene throughout the awful hours of His agony?

I love to find in the Seven Words of Jesus from the Cross a kind of treatise on the *Science of Life.*

The first three Words explain, under three different headings, the *Work of Life.*

Now, the work of life, my child, for every true disciple of Christ is *perfect lovingkindness.*

Why are we here? To be loving and kind. Lovingkindness includes all else, and is included by nothing. Now, lovingkindness is summed up in three principal actions.

1. Forgiveness of enemies. That is the reason of Christ's first Word, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Whoever is unforgiving is none of Christ's. Since Calvary we are no longer allowed to revenge ourselves, to make reprisals and to be inexorable. Those who do these things and shed blood are pagans. We are to be loving and kind to all men, and so I repeat that the first act of lovingkindness is to forgive those who have harmed you, who blacken your reputation, who misunderstand you, who oppress, torment, betray, and crucify you; who insult you as you die, who pierce your side and slay you.

How many pagans there still are, my poor daughter, some even beneath the habits of monks and nuns! And to imagine that there are Christians who would *shed blood* in the cause of Christ! His cause

is not to be forwarded by the sword, but by the Cross; not by slaying others, but by dying oneself; not by inflicting torments, but by suffering them.

2. The second action of lovingkindness, is to open up to others the road to Paradise: that is, to lead them to God. Therefore Jesus addressed to His companion in suffering the ineffable Word, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.'

Forgiveness is a negative action: it is not sufficient to refrain from cursing, we must bless. Now to bless, my only daughter, is to do good after having wished it, and perfect good is God. It follows, then, that to bless means to give God when one possesses Him. Christ possessed Him in fulness because He was God Himself in the form of the Crucified, and so He could truly say, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.'

But we, who are only disciples of God, work from the outside, disposing poor malefactors to penitence, encouraging them to patience and well-doing, and announcing the Christ Who can save them. Thus only can we perform this act of infinite lovingkindness.

3. The third act of lovingkindness, is to create strong links between souls, uniting them together. The good tend to draw together; the bad cause disunion. The good love; the bad hate. Love is a cement; hatred is a solvent.

In that touching scene where Christ makes Mary the mother by adoption of St. John, and St. John the son by adoption of Mary, I love to find an adorable instance of this law of attraction by means of which Christ has established new ties, tender and strong, between man and man. Wherever you find a true disciple of Christ you will also find a principle of

union between souls. And as Christ Himself was the only cause of love between the Blessed Virgin and St. John, so He is still the divine cause of the union of those who love one another in Him. What stronger tie could exist, or sweeter, than this? Work out for yourself, dear child, the thoughts I have suggested. Christ's words have no limit; no comment can exhaust their meaning; the deeper you dig, the richer they are seen to be.

Now learn the *Law of Life.*

The first law of our human life is suffering; there can be no fruitful life without suffering. Well, here in these words you have the formula of absolute suffering, if I may so term it: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

Yes, the bitterest suffering which can be experienced by the soul of a righteous man—I do not say, mind, the soul of a brute nor yet of a brutish man, or a rascal—the enlightened soul of a righteous man, is its forsaking by God. All is lost, you tell me; so be it! I am still strong and serene if God abide. But what will become of me if God depart? But, you say, God does not depart; He would not depart from the soul of the righteous. That is perfectly true as a matter of fact, but the righteous soul may *lose touch* of that God for Whom it lives, and Whom it no longer feels present.

That was the awful experience that the Righteous One suffered and willed to suffer. That is what caused that agonised cry which makes my heart ache in unison: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

There is no note of despair in this cry, nothing derogatory from the holy manhood of Christ; it is the expression of a momentary loss of the feeling of God.

And this, my child, is the bitterest agony that a holy soul can feel.

The animal man cannot understand this, and the philosopher can scarcely imagine it. Only the soul whose very life is God can attempt to realise what it means.

The second Law of Life is contained in this word *sitio*, I thirst!

You will understand that in this Word is not merely expressed the physical condition of the Crucified, parched as He was with need of water. It implies another thirst—a soul-thirst which longs for the accomplishment of the work for which He lived and suffered, and for which He is dying.

Nothing can be done without such a burning thirst. The greatest souls all suffered the greatest thirst—thirst of truth, love, goodness; thirst, in fact, of God.

Jesus, being Himself perfect God and perfect Man, could not know that thirst; but He thirsted to bestow upon all infinite truth, love, and goodness.

This, my child, is the splendid meaning, to Christians, of this Word, 'I thirst!' which shook Calvary and has shaken the world. It reminds us of a former Word of His under different circumstances: 'If thou knewest Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.'

The third Law of Life, my dear daughter, is, Labour, Work. We must do absolutely *all* to accomplish His work, so as to be able to say at our last hour, 'It is finished!'

Jesus alone could say this Word in the fullest extension of its meaning. We can never say it because we only fulfil a *part* of what we ought to do. But

Jesus is the Ideal, and His life is truly fulfilled : He has only said and done what He should. His life is perfect, while ours is but a poor beginning. But at least we know the law, and must do our utmost to attain to it.

One word in conclusion, my dear only daughter. I have taught you the Work of Life and the Law of Life ; now learn the supreme End of Life. ' Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.' God the Father is the End of life ; to commit ourselves to Him is our way of leaving this world. The brute beasts return to earth ; brutish men seek the void which they will not find ; godless men in their pride of intellect would fain keep their own personality. We, through Christ, go to God.

Dear child, have we not the happiest lot ? Yes, be God's entirely. And may these lifeless pages marked with ink help you to surrender yourself without reserve to Christ. Let us love Him and be His disciples ; let us live as He has taught us in His death. I bless you and love you with a holy love. Yours.

112

Corbara : April 12, 1881.

My poor dear only Daughter,—Be strong enough for every sacrifice. Such strength you will find in Christ alone, for no created thing can really console and sustain. The only lever whereby the oppressed soul can be upraised is the living Spirit, the Spirit of our crucified Redeemer. I do not cease to pray for you. Rejoice that you have heard in your conscience the call of God, for it is a most precious gift.

I could wish to see you ever in the beauty of self-sacrifice and unselfishness, making no request,

forgetful of self, reckoning yourself happy in being misunderstood and tormented for the love of Christ. That is true perfectness; the rest is illusory, serving as a cloak to our persistent egoism, our incurable vanity and shallowness.

I speak to you, my daughter, from the depth of my conscience. I anxiously desire you to follow the same path of suffering in which the inscrutable will of God is leading me. I approve the course you are taking; be prepared to meet unforeseen circumstances which may arise. If anything extraordinary occur, we shall seek direction from God.

Be quite passive and calm, asking nothing, making no conditions; treat yourself as non-existent. I know it is hard; but if one love Christ really, it is sweet to feel oneself crucified with Him. God can, in very truth, deprive us of this feeling, and then we taste indeed the pangs of the agony. Yet these awful hours of nameless suffering pass at last; God's might does not suffer eclipse for long in the eyes of the broken-hearted. These lines will be enough for to-day, as I sent you a long homily on Sunday.

Good-bye, my only daughter. May Christ make you live, but first die. That is the law: no man lives unless he has first gone down into the grave to death.

Ah, the grave! I am well acquainted with that dark pit in which the germs of life are produced. Yours.

113

Corbara: April 26, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—I am expecting Father J. in a few hours. I shall go to meet him at the cross-roads to Calvi and Corbara, which is about six kilometres from the monastery. God grants me

these visits of friends from time to time to sustain me, and I am looking forward with joy to seeing him. As you climb the last steep hill of Calvary bearing the Cross, you need here and there a friend to wipe your brow, and to bear for a few moments the cross on which you are going to die.

Otherwise I am quite well, in spite of my life of intense prayer and work, and notwithstanding the terrible strain arising from my worries.

The principal source of bodily strength is neither bread, nor wine, nor raw meat, but the soul. And the soul's source of strength is God. At the Divine touch our spiritual energies redouble their strength, and well do I understand the meaning of Christ's mysterious saying, 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall remove mountains.'

Faith is God in realisation, God in man, God become the principle of life within, God the sovereign Master of our will and our spirit. Who, then, can resist God? But faith is rare. It does not consist in saying the Creed, in repeating a series of definitions of what is necessary to religious truth. To believe means to be wholly God's man and Christ's; it is to *have faith* in Him in the fullest meaning of the words. Just think of it, to have faith! Nothing is mightier than that.

My work takes up my whole time. As I think I have already told you, I have been studying the Jewish people for the last two months, and during the latter half of this time I have been deep in converse with the greatest men of that wonderful race—the Prophets.

You cannot imagine how much insight I have gained, and with what enthusiasm I have become inspired for those wonderful men. There are men of

faith for you! Nothing was able to shake their invincible belief in the future and in Him they called Jehovah; neither the slow working of Providence, nor the constant backsliding of an idolatrous and stiffnecked people; not political misfortunes nor the actual ruin of their nation, their holy city and Temple, any more than their own personal persecutions.

When all around crumbled and fell they stood erect; when all others were despairing they steadfastly believed, appealing to the justice and love of God with a voice which succeeding centuries have not silenced. And this justice and love did not fail to respond: we, the heirs of the Prophets who hear the response in Christ, still thrill at the sound of their mighty cry after the lapse of 3,000 years.

See how great they are, my daughter, for they have part in eternity. But what were they between two and three thousand years ago—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Nahum, and Ezekiel—compared with Sennacherib, Pharaoh, or Nebuchadnezzar? These kings seemed to cover all the earth with their glory. Yet now they only live by virtue of that scrap of immortality bestowed upon them by the divine writings of the Prophets.

My book on Christ necessitates a study of the Israelite nation. It is impossible to appreciate aright the *human form* in which it pleased God to appear without a thorough knowledge of the race and nation, with its religion and civilisation, whence Christ arose. Therefore just now I am a Jew, that is, I am trying to identify myself with the race from which Christ borrowed His fashion of speech and mode of thought. Again, it must be noted how the coming of Jesus had been prepared by a long series of prophets, crowned in divine fashion by

Himself; to what degree He had been heralded, awaited, and prophesied by them; in what manner He brought about the union of manhood with God in this elect people. Books of weight cannot be put together with ease, and as I realise the amount of research and the quantity of notes which my work on Christ has already entailed, and as I form an estimate of what is still required, I blush to have published with such unconcern my former little essays.

Still, we can but impart our thoughts to others, even though the medium be imperfect. If we waited for perfection we should die before our work was accomplished. Infinity is on all sides of us; we do but seize broken rays of its light, and they alone are truly great who, knowing this fundamental impotence of mankind, do not hand on their poor productions to others without qualification.

Your lot, my daughter, is not like mine, to brave the fearful storms of that ocean of Truth; you, whose single duty is self-sanctification, must lose no time. Aim at simplicity, direct your loving heart on God and Christ. If you are loved, praise God for it; if you are forsaken, praise Him still, asking for nothing.

Is not Christ sufficient for you?

Would that my poor example might help you! Of what use are the counsels of the lips? Words are vain unless they are the exact equivalent of our virtues and selflessness.

I give you my blessing with deep affection, and also to poor little M. She must have faith, she must be sustained by the desire of holiness. How glorious a thing it is to be God's alone and to die in fulfilling one's duty!

Again I bless you. Yours.

114

Corbara: May 1, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—Your letter of Friday night gave me no further enlightenment, but only confirmed my presentiments.

The events of life register God's order; they are imposed upon us without appeal.

I am thankful that Providence has caused your tribulations and sufferings to develop in you the religious element which is the richest and best part of your nature, and which should be your great safeguard in life.

Poor M. T.! It will be a great wrench to her to part with you, but there is nothing to be gained by lamentations. The fact stands and has to be met.

Since Friday night, my only daughter, I have been praying with increased earnestness, trying to put away everything which might hinder a clear view of the truth, or stifle the voice of God in my heart.

Listen now, and weigh my words well as the words prompted by a conscience endeavouring to reflect truth and goodness.

You have a soul which is deeply, unalterably, keenly religious and Christian. This ineffaceable mark of your nature I have never overlooked; it has been constantly before me and I have done my utmost to develop, strengthen, and increase it.

Your great danger arises from your affectionate heart, from your impulsive activity, from that *projection* of yourself outwards which occurs whenever a ray of light, love, beauty, and warmth falls upon you; in a word, from your human nature.

I have always kept in view the fact that, unless this

human side of your nature were restrained, the divine, religious side would be stunted, and that you would suffer loss, not of the fundamental things, the root, so to speak, but the branches of the glorious tree.

The clear perception of this, combined with my lofty affection for you, has always guided me in my relations with you. It is the reason, my poor child, why I have continually urged you to self-sacrifice. A great moral duty rests on you, my daughter, whatever may be the circumstances of your life, whether you are in society, living in a strange family, or alone.

This is the duty :—

First, make a point, before aught else, of maintaining in their entirety, your faith, your religion, your Christianity.

Keep close to Christ, possessed by His Spirit—the sovereign, active force of all your energies.

Secondly, build up by faithfulness to conscience, by active exercise of virtue and perseverance, a secret sanctuary within, known to God alone—a sanctuary for Christ to guard. Withdraw within it to offer yourself in continual sacrifice.

Thirdly, do not keep increasing your acquaintances; do not be too ready to meet advances ; only mingle freely with others for the purpose of doing good.

Make this, my dear only daughter, your *Sinaitic* law ; grave it, in better fashion than Moses' law, not on stone which breaks, but on your heart. The heart is stronger than bronze although more tender.

Have courage : keep me informed about everything. Man and the world are powerless against you, for what God marks is indeed marked. A faith born of intuition tells me that your soul is such as God requires ; that come what may, now or later, you are made for Christ and will be His.

Tell little M. that I pray for her, my unknown child who thought I had forsaken her. No. I am one of the constant kind; those whom I leave have generally left me in secret long before. I go forward; you must follow me without rest or pause; if you do not—I go forward still! I give you my blessing with love from on high.

115

Corbara: May 12, 1881.

Dear Child,—You must not think of coming here to see me. However great a comfort it would be to both of us, we must nevertheless offer it up in sacrifice.

When God brings about the end of my exile, He will doubtless reunite us; till then I am in my grave, and must stay there—alone.

I pray unceasingly and work harder than ever. The burden of my sorrows I cast upon God and Christ, and I go forward with the purpose of becoming less unworthy of our great apostleship by freely yielding up my life. Go forward also on the road which God places before you; He will sustain you.

There are some difficult passages in life which must be gone through with patience, courage, and faith. I feel that I am not able to do more than give you general directions, which are likely to be inadequate. In case of urgency, take counsel of Father Mercier; you know how good and discreet he is and how fond he is of you.

Speaking of him reminds me that I do not want him to think for a moment that I am less his friend than formerly. Although our opinions are not

absolutely the same, and occasionally clash, he knows well enough that I am not narrow-minded, and that my heart is not dependent on my opinions.

I want also to warn you against the malicious gossip of the D.'s *salon*. I never believe what is told me of others unless the proofs are forthcoming. I consider this an act of absolute charity in our gossiping world.

One thing I know well: namely, that I never write a line—except a few complimentary or formal letters—without the intention of sustaining the courage of my correspondents in the matter of morality and religion.

When you have undergone troubles such as I have borne, my poor only daughter, you prune your life of many things. I have now come to have but one object of desire—to do good to all men, even to my enemies, since they exist, and to save such souls as appeal for my help. Beyond that I have no interest.

Also I am quite indifferent as to what people say or think about me, what they report me as having said or thought.

If I were not absolutely and vividly convinced of the duty laid upon me to bring light to the blinded eyes of men who cannot perceive Christ, I assure you I should shut myself up in a Chartreux monastery without a moment's hesitation.

It is not the ambition or glory of being an apostle that attracts me. I know that I shall meet numberless difficulties, persecutions, and calumnies of every description; endless mistrust which will not be remedied, but I am prepared for all that. My heroic mother will revive in me; I feel the sustaining presence of her who was killed by my first trials.

Now, at least, I cause her no suffering and need no more encourage her.

It is she who now inspirits me, spreading her wings above my head like a shield.

My hard life continues, but I have no murmur against my lot, nor against men, earth, or heaven. Let us march on with light and holy hearts, for Christ fully suffices.

When we drink of His cup we taste sweetness after bitterness; the madness of courage succeeds the madness of pain.

May Christ's power be over you and in you. I give you my blessing, my dear only daughter, and have no need to assure you of my profound and religious affection.

116

Corbara: May 22, 1881.

My poor and dear Child,—I cannot repeat too often: Be strong, brave, patient, energetic, resolute. Make no murmuring against any, neither against God, nor circumstances, nor the difficulties of your life. Complaint is an infirmity: it remedies nothing and enfeebles our energies without purpose. Tread with faith the path which circumstances—those messengers of God—open up before you.

I am happy to think that Providence is kind to you in your hour of difficulty, since it has surrounded you with friends devoted to your service and full of unswerving affection.

Your religious temperament has now acquired sufficient stability and, unless my hopes are deceived, my dear only daughter, the actual goal has been reached.

Now you must look forward and onward to the

destined end of your life. My duty, as you know, has always been to lead you onward and upward; to free you from self and to make you fit for God, Whose love has, for high purposes, associated you with my lot of suffering. I cannot help you in small matters: exiled, imprisoned, paralysed, there is scarcely anything I can do, but Providence will make provision. Others, sent by God, will do what I cannot and no doubt will do it better.

What should be your object henceforward? If you can see it clearly, my only daughter, you will be a woman of parts; you will get quite rid of the dreams of the girl of twenty, of the illusions of personal love, the narrowness of selfish love, the vanity, in fact, of all created things by whatever name they may be gilded.

Your object, my child, should be to devote yourself to the instruction of the people, so as to cause the light of Christ to shine where now godlessness seems to reign unopposed.

This object harmonises with your nature from whatever side I consider it, even from that side which is so strongly in sympathy with mine. It appeals to your instinctive generosity, your republicanism, the need you feel of influencing others and sharing in their life.

Now, what is the best way of compassing this end. I cannot say at all, there are so many ways. Personally, I should like to see you fired with the idea which caused Pauline de M. to open her high school; or you might begin by obtaining a post in the elementary schools in Paris. Afterwards we shall see. But, in any case, you should go among the people as teacher, so that you may be able to instruct them—*without their knowing it*—in the religion

which I have been doing my best to teach you all these years, and which has become the very soul of your life.

You are not strong enough, you say? God gives health, and, besides, if you die at the work, well—you will die. Life is of no account with us. Henceforth, my child, I can but welcome anything which forwards this object, and I entirely approve your idea of taking the higher certificate. If you are comfortable at the Benedictine House at Mantes you should stay there; you will have opportunity for work, peace, and solitude—all indispensable in preparing for an examination. Think well over what I say, as I have thought before writing to you. And then say very little about it even to your closest friends.

Go forward with faith; the further you advance in this noble course, the nearer we shall draw one to the other.

The grace of Christ works in me unceasingly. I feel more than ever surrendered to the call of apostleship, and not a fibre of my being is in discord with God's will for me. Leave your dreams; henceforth you are high above them. Your real power is the light and divine love of God.

Yes, I have replied to M. T. I simply thanked her for her kindness to you; not a word more, not the merest syllable. Silence has tremendous force—it kills.

Do likewise, my daughter; and when you have to write what I call keeping-letters, rewrite them always, mind. Where you have covered two pages in the first copy, make only one in the second; then rewrite this in the limits of half a page, and if you can manage with a single sentence do not write

more. The more condensed words are, the stronger they are. Remember my advice.

Good-bye, my dear child. May Christ have you in His keeping. I bless you in Him with my usual love.

117

Corbara: May 29, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—I am deeply touched by the affection and kindness showered upon you by the Superior of the Benedictines at Mantes; please convey my thanks to him.

All you tell me of his opinions and character makes me like him, and I shall hope some day to express to him my hearty gratitude. As to the pressing invitation he has given you to stay there, I cannot undertake to advise it.

. . . . . .

Launch out into the deep sea. I do not retract a single word of my last letter; on the contrary, having read yours, I ratify and emphasise every word I wrote. If the tempest be too fierce, we shall find it out, and there will be plenty of time to make other arrangements.

Let those who are bound to condemn talk as much as they choose; what matters the judgment of men?

You have only one way of silencing them: that is, to be a thorough Christian, and to rise to the height of Christ's inspiration as I have always taught you.

Prepare, therefore, unremittingly for your examination, and do not leave Mantes without this new diploma.

I am returning S.'s letter to you. Better leave

all that alone. There is nothing worth keeping in that past experience except gratitude towards those who were kind to you, and pardon to those who treated you badly. Excelsior! Higher yet!

Life demands brave hearts who do not look back. What good is there in thinking over what is no more? Is it not better to prepare for what is coming? Is time so valueless that we can waste it, dwelling upon old memories? I march right on without staying to bury the dead. I go to the living; I take them with me and rest my arms upon their shoulders. We must make haste, my daughter, the day is closing, and we must take advantage of God's glorious light. When night comes we must lie down in that great sleep; and suppose our work is unfinished!

Do not fear for me, my only daughter, that I am growing weary of my tomb. God has made me patient, tenacious, and persevering. What I have once undertaken I do not quit. My road lies in difficult country; many have essayed to follow me, but have given it up in discouragement. But I can neither alter my direction nor stop, for God calls me, and I must march on. Is it I who have chosen this hard life? Are these my own ideas which have drawn down on me such persecution? Did I plan to include Corbara in my route? Did I bring it about that bereavement has added a hundredfold to the bitterness of exile? What I do is at the bidding of duty, that infallible voice of God, sometimes apparently harsh, yet really and essentially loving.

By inspiration of the grace of God and stirred by the grace of Christ, I have done more than my duty here: I have held my peace under blows; I have not exercised my full right, for I might have said with

Christ, 'If I have done evil, bear witness of the evil; but if not, why smitest thou me?'

I said nothing, but offered to God the smoking holocaust without reserve or precautions. May He be glorified thereby! Besides, all comes from Him; our poor merits are His work. What should we be but for the divine attraction to good which draws us?

You ask me questions without number in your letter, my poor child. I should need ten secretaries to reply to them all. We will reserve them till we meet, if God permit.

My faith is in God alone—a faith passionate and strong to remove mountains. In this faith I shall die.

Why is the head of a corpse so heavy? Ah! my daughter, it is because it is equally heavy in life, only then the sphere is kept balanced by the powerful muscles of the neck. After death these muscles cease to act: the bony structure of the head filled with brains cannot keep its position on the small vertebræ of the neck, thus it falls in all directions according to the position of the corpse.

Well, good-bye, my dear only daughter. May Christ keep you in peace, in the power of supporting tribulation, in perfect charity. Shelter poor little M. under your wings; sacrifice yourself to teach her to do the same. She is face to face with a great crisis in her life. Ah! how well I understand anyone giving his life to save a soul still free. And there is a way, my child, of giving one's life quite like the martyrs; it is sanctity. For this means dying to self every day and every hour in order to live to God in Christ. I would have you thus, and I strive myself so to be. Pray for my success. With deep affection I give you my blessing.

118

Corbara: June 7, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—I have received no answer yet to my last two letters. It is more than a fortnight since I wrote the first, and more than a week since the second, and both—in your present circumstances—were very important.

I repeat to you, my child, in case of urgency, when there is some decision to be made, take counsel of Father Mercier. I am so far off and so much a prisoner that I can do hardly anything to help you in this time of anxiety.

I am going to write to Pauline de M. about you. She may be able to be of service to you, for I know she loves you and would do all she could for you.

This lack of power to aid those I love is not the least of the troubles caused by my life of exile. To be a mere cipher is not insupportable when it is only a question of one's own interests; but when you see those suffering whom Christ seems to have committed to your charge, and are unable to go to them, it is terrible!

Life is indeed a mystery, full of contradictions which bruise us as they clash together. This blood-stained planet was surely created for the strong alone; the weak are pitilessly crushed.

Oh! how I pity such whenever I chance to meet them. With what cries of anguish I commend them to God Who deigned Himself to be crushed by men, and Whose mercy seems sometimes so slow in helping the oppressed.

You ask me, my child, to explain that mysterious page of Genesis which contains the account of the drama of the First Sin.

We must not press over much the literal rendering of the ancient narratives in Genesis; if we do, we come face to face with improbabilities and impossibilities from which we cannot escape except by postulating a series of miracles. This is inadmissible in my opinion, because by thus multiplying miracles you overlook their essentially exceptional character, and derogate from the wisdom, order, dignity, and majesty of God.

Besides, it is incontestable that the first of our species were less cultured than the men of to-day. Their conceptions of divine things were different from ours, and their language was essentially imaginative and symbolical, having none of the accuracy, abstraction, and metaphysical dryness possessed by speech in later times.

They did not shrink from constantly employing anthropomorphisms, that is to say, mentioning human attributes when speaking of the Godhead. They ascribed to Him feet, hands, breast, nostrils, eyelids—in fact, the appurtenances of man. They spoke of passions, such as anger and vengeance, in connection with the expression of His justice. That is why it is impossible to take the accounts in Genesis in a literal sense.

Really what we are to see in the account of the Fall is the fact of disobedience to a Divine command. I could easily prove this by quotations from many commentaries, but what value would they have? About as much as our own individual thoughts—*scarcely any at all.*

I have received some letters, my dear only daughter, from C.'s cousin, accompanied by a letter from that charming person herself. I shall shortly write to her about them, and shall endeavour to tell

her how to deal with such a loyal nature as his, shut up as it is within the limits of the positive method of the exact sciences.

I continue in good health despite my constant worries. These last three months which I have spent since my return to exile after my mother's death have been terrible in their strain. There has been violence in everything: my grief, work, prayers, sufferings, hopes, resolutions, sacrifices, all violent alike; and the whole burnt-offering has to be offered anew every day; the victim has to be placed again upon the altar that the fire from God may again consume it.

It is not a simple matter to be a monk! May my self-sacrifice at least be availing to those I love, and bring a little glory to Christ!

As for you, work. Study for your higher examination, but do not overtire yourself. Remember that, after all, it is only our virtues which count in God's sight; our poor thoughts are mere dreams, but the blood of our sacrifices mingled with the Blood of Christ is precious.

And so, my dear child, do not grudge your sacrifices, nor your sorrows, nor your willing martyrdom. All these increase your worth before Christ, and being suffered for His sake they will cause your salvation in eternity.

It is glorious and good to die to self, to get rid of all that is fleshly which degrades and encumbers us. It is divine to have loosed hold of earth and to have become buried in God before the time.

Let us, then, have the full courage of renunciation; let us rise above the surface of the surrounding mediocrity. The least regret, the shortest glance

backwards would be more than weakness ; it would be cowardice and treason.

My blessing be with you, my poor little daughter, and my love in Christ, Who keeps you in spite of everything.

P.S.—I have just received your letter while closing this. Again I say that, being so far off and isolated, I cannot advise you with full knowledge of the circumstances ; and that, therefore, it is my duty to tell you, my daughter, to take counsel of Father Mercier.

119

Corbara : June 14, 1881.

I can well understand your dear mother's feelings, my poor child, and am at least as sorry about it as you are.

Banished as I am, I cannot give you detailed advice or afford you solid help. I feel that I am in ignorance of so many circumstances that I am not in a condition to judge competently what course you should take.

The first thing to do is to ensure your financial position, in the interests of your health and your bodily requirements.

Do not lose heart, dear child. We must not take feeling as our guide, for that will lead us astray and utterly fail. We must do what is laid upon us by reason, by conscience, by Christ.

Trials follow one upon another during this exile —death of those I love, difficulties of friends, and impotence to help ! All that is left me is the hidden life, but that belongs to eternity : it is of little use for the immediate needs of this world.

All lives have their fierce crises. Sometimes it seems to please God to shake His poor creature, so

that not a bone remains unbroken. One might think that God is trying to draw from our suffering lives a wailing harmony, made up of all the cries of anguish which the tortured heart is capable of uttering! And throughout all this we must remain gentle, peaceful, patient, and resigned; we must choke back all complaint, all murmurings and recriminations. Fixing our eyes on Christ, like Him we must suffer, pardon, bless, and love!

This is the only noble way.

And besides, life is a torrent; events hurry by. We are carried along in the resistless flow of things, of which God alone has the secret. We are going on to death: that is, to what is unremovable, unchanging; we pass to that which is without shadow, sadness, or sorrow—to eternal light, eternal love, eternal peace.

This is a world for the violent, the cunning, and the Positives. All there is for the others is to die on their Calvary; yet their lot is not to be pitied. I prefer my bare cross to the pitiful triumphs of the fat and satisfied.

Do you not agree with me, my poor dear daughter?

I am sending you, with this letter, my reply to C. as well as her cousin's letters; please forward them. And who is that little friend of Mme. L.'s who tells wonderful stories about Father Didon? That is how history is written. I am in perfect health, and have no reason to think that I am to be sent to Elba for change of air.

I was told in a letter the other day that I had been to Paris for Easter, and that a certain gentleman had seen me and spoken to me!!!

I am glad to say that I am generally considered dead now, and so I am at peace.

Good-bye, my dearest child; work hard for your coming examination and be a brave woman. Begin your real life.

My blessing be with you. May Christ keep you. I desire that my sufferings may be a blessing and strength to you. Yours.

120

Corbara: June 20, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—Our hearts are bound to gain in sincerity and hatred of self in proportion as we draw close to God.

Evil is a great stumbling-block to minds which love the good and beautiful. Hence the formidable problem: If God exists, why does evil exist?

Therefore God does not exist, is the conclusion drawn by the perturbed soul. Yet, from the other limit of the soul's horizon, comes a voice, far gentler and not less irresistible, which says: Nevertheless good exists, were it only in thy keen spiritual aspirations.

And if good exists, must not God also?

Our poor puzzled reason finds itself involved in tremendous contradictions, to which it has humbly to resign itself.

Those who can come to no decision regarding this incurable and primal infirmity simply say: Good and evil are relative matters. All is good and all is evil; in infinity all is blended together, and opposites are reconciled in an ineffable synthesis. In fact, good and evil are one and the same. Now to reason thus means suicide of the reason, and better live than commit suicide.

So our poor reason is condemned to its inevitable torture, since it can escape only by self-destruction.

This shows us, my dear daughter, how miserable we must be without Christ our God. For my own part, when I am most severely racked by suffering, I gaze on God crucified. He has embraced suffering, so suffering has its use. And wherefore should I complain? He was innocent, and I am not.

One of the poor wretches writhing in pain at the side of the dying Christ said this very thing, and I love to repeat it to myself. Pain is a great factor in life, for it develops the *eternal man* in us. Bit by bit, it breaks away our selfishness; it quenches our fiery volcano with its icy waters; it disembodies us.

When one has gone through exquisite agony, sensuality is a devil conquered. Things material become repulsive after drinking deep of the vinegar, gall, and myrrh of the Crucified. It is an immense deception which deludes the young. But when God wills to draw a soul to Himself, He leads it by such paths that whatever your temperament, whatever your special flame of temptation, whatever filth you may be coated with, the temperament is subdued; you are enabled to quench or rather transform the flame and to shake off in dust that plastered filth.

The first struggle is with the passions. While the Devil is at large, one is not fit for the kingdom of God.

But when, by Christ's grace, he is muzzled and fettered, though he snarls and bares his poisonous teeth, he can no longer get at us.

It is hard, my daughter, to climb the rocky steeps of that stern peak where dwell the uncarnal; from time to time we need to be carried by Christ Himself.

You have had a visit from your dear little Victorine.

She is so very fond of you that it must have been a great joy to her to see you and be with you. Do good to those with whom you come in contact, and remember, my daughter, that we cannot do good unless the Spirit of Christ dwells in us: He dwells in purified hearts alone, and the only purified hearts are the hearts which have suffered.

Work on bravely for your examination and be quick and pass it. I rely on P. de M. to find you a suitable post.

I can never tell you too often, my only daughter, to be brave, faithful to all that you hold dear; to grow in Christ and to do good. Help me by your sacrifices. Yours as a father.

121

June 23.

May this date be true to its associations and memories of sacrifice; but that depends on you. Man has not any power, thank God, over our inner self; that at least is our own and God's.

Do not look back on the past except for the purpose of getting a clear view of it and preventing it from deceiving you. Let us continue faithful to God and ourselves. When men abandon and betray us, let us bless them and remain still. For it is not worth while overcoming them in argument and exposing their malice, passion, cruelty, and stupidity; let us rather leave them alone and pray without bitterness for them, just as Christ did for His murderers.

When He cursed the Pharisees it was not for any personal reason, or because of their treatment of Him; it was on account of their religious hypocrisy

which obstructed the weak from approaching Christ the Saviour.

May my poor example be of assistance to you in this. In the past I have written perhaps some noble words to you, but what are words? Mere breath which is valueless until signed and sealed in the blood of tribulation.

God must have loved me, since it has been His will that I should show a hero's constancy to my grievous lot. He has stripped me of all, and I have clung to nothing of it. And if in order to save souls of men I must even die, then I would die unmurmuring—yea, with a *brimming* heart.

To the victims the sacrifice is everything. It opens up the never-failing source of living water in the soul, which springs up to life eternal.

Good-bye, my dear only daughter. My blessing with the love of one who has sacrificed all for Christ.

122

Corbara : June 28, 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—Truly noble are your desires of utter self-sacrifice which are doubtless inspired by the Great Victim, Christ, Whom we adore. I say again, my child, that I have never doubted that you possess a soul capable of the fullest sacrifice.

. . . . . .

No virtue corresponds exactly to its detailed description. The real grave is not that which lies before men's eyes, but the invisible rock known to God alone, in whose recesses, far from human cares, the surrendered soul reposes in the serene slumber of undivided self-abnegation.

That is what I want to say to you in reply to

your last letter. Now make haste to pass your examination, and obtain a post. In this matter I must leave you to yourself, because it is manifestly impossible for me to advise you where I am quite ignorant of details. P. de M. will be of great help to you and will give you good advice. For your own sake and for mine she will do all she can for you, so you must go to her.

I am rather inclined to fear that the noisy life of Paris may be too much for you in the present state of your health ; yet when once launched you must be brave and self-reliant, trusting in God Who cares for the little birds, and Who rules the storm.

We have quite tropical heat here ; my rock is a gridiron on which I am roasted like St. Laurence. After deep draughts of sorrow's bitter cup, bodily hardship is of no account. It is merely an insignificant detail. Besides, the earth goes rolling on ; in two months' time we shall be feeling the breeze grow fresher at the foot of Mt. Sant' Angelo, and the sea, which now seems to bubble like molten lead, will again be blue and lively.

I still work hard at my Life of Christ, and shall soon have finished the section dealing with the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. From whatever aspect one regards Him, how remarkable and portentous He appears, absolutely unique beyond comparison !

Before me lies a book which was first edited in the ninth century before Christ, and concluded four centuries before His coming—the Book of the Prophets. This book is full of Him, describing His Person, life, and work in magnificent language, hundreds of years before the event. Human intelligence stands aghast at this evidence of

purpose in the drama of history. There is, then, a Ruler and Master far above our little human miseries, a superhuman Being in the midst of men: God is dwelling in our midst.

I should like to tell you all about my studies, both in books and in what is far deeper and more affecting—the living book of conscience, where the finger of God is ever writing new pages in fire, blood, and tears, or sometimes in His Spirit.

Good-bye, my only daughter; take good care of yourself during this hot weather. Do not overtire yourself, and keep your soul in peace, faith, and courage. Hélène has a beautiful character: you should cultivate her affection. Her nature is all *sursum*. I bless you from the depth of my heart with the love of the Crucified.

123

Corbara: July 5, 1881.

I expect, my poor dear child, that after calmly thinking over my advice in the presence of God you will have recognised its wisdom. I know that there is a long distance, alas! between myself and such great souls as St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and Lacordaire. But I try to follow—clumsily it may be—in their steps; and as Christ shines forth to me more and more clearly I go forward at all hazards, accepting all sacrifices, whither my conscience sternly points. God rides me with cruel spurs and a strong bit like a restless horse, praised be His name! Life is short, the journey hard, but the end is glorious.

Let us, then, go forward with a firm step, never wavering or retreating. There comes indeed at last a bitter sweetness in suffering. In the midst of it,

when one can bear no more and cries for mercy, comes Christ invisible to succour, and visit us with the Spirit. Beyond doubt, pain is an unfathomable mystery. This law of sacrifice, which weighs on us poor creatures whether we will or no, is a law which our frail heart and reason, still more frail, cannot attempt to grasp. I stand dumb before the sufferings of Jesus crucified, and in Him I adore all that my heart and head fail to understand. The reality is so far above our puny conceptions. It is better to gaze steadily at it with its apparent impossibilities, its towering peaks and sheer precipices, than by a series of sophistries to construct a feeble representation according to our own ideas.

I go forward, therefore, on my rough road, with vigorous though blind steps, to Christ Who has subdued me, and to Whom I gladly sacrifice all I have. May you obtain, dear child, strength and support from my example to walk in paths unworn, at the edge of precipices where God alone can keep us in safety.

P. de M. has been writing to me about your future. She will arrange an interview for you with the Russian teacher, who has come to France to engage an assistant mistress for the Imperial College of which she is the head. See what can be done in the matter, and think over the Russian lady's proposals. Be sure to choose one suitable to the interests of your health, comfort, liberty, and future career.

My life goes on unchanged, a life of work, prayer, and sacrifice.

The comet has brought no change in the weather and the oppressive heat seems to increase. Thank God, I do not feel it very much, and can still do my eight hours' work every day.

I am nearly at the end of my studies on 'the historical and prophetical preparation for Christ.' To see this matter in its proper light, I have had to pass in review the whole of the Old Testament, the entire history of the Jews, and all the Prophets; besides mastering the considerable mass of exegetics on these subjects which has been poured forth during the last hundred years.

I am perfectly convinced that our classical studies are insufficient, and that we are living under the dominion of prejudices which, so far from protecting the truth, only serve to disguise, compromise, and lessen it.

I feel able, by God's grace, to let the sword of speech rust in its sheath; to live unknown to man, in the sole presence of God and my conscience.

Good-bye, my dear only daughter. May God bless your work and sustain you in all inner conflicts. Without Him there is no power anywhere; man can do nought to save. It is God alone Who saves; all we can do is to prepare the way for Him. O my child! may Christ be with you and in you. I bless you, and love you with religious affection.

124

Corbara: July 6, 1881.

My Child,—I am writing to-day to M. le Comte C. to ask him if he can kindly give you an introduction to the B.'s, and I will let you know when I hear from him. I do not know whether the Count is in Rome, or even whether he is in a position to help you; but I am quite sure that if he can do so he will. Providence will assist us, and P. de M. will do all she can too.

Italy would suit you better than any other country, for in Rome one feels quite at home. It is something, mind, not to feel exiled. We French are so attached to our land, its mountains, hills, and plains. My only exhortation to you to-day is, Business.

To-morrow I shall spend the whole day on Mount Sant' Angelo under this blazing sun. There I shall pray, enjoy the mountain air, and sit, plunged in thought, gazing at the mountains of France in the distance ; and at sunset I shall go back to my tomb. Good-bye. My love and blessing to you, dear child.

125

Corbara : July 11, 1881.

My poor dear Child,—Heroic courage is needed to live one's life bravely. And there come times when heroic courage is not enough. Man is reduced to nothingness; Christ, Who liveth, must help. These are not empty words I write, but the loud cry of my enlightened conscience in full vision of the divine fact.

I want you to lay firm hold of this, dear child. You will be ill-balanced except you have a complete and real love of Christ, and can put every created thing in its proper place—utter vanity and nothingness.

To arrive at this, be sure, my most dear daughter, you must fall down before the dying Christ, yourself suffering and dying alone, with none else present. Ah ! there is none other there : the disciples and friends are asleep fifty paces in the rear, and in utter faith and self-surrender you must say : Thy death shall be my death ; Thy life, my life ; Thy example shall be my law ; Thy Word shall be my

light ; Thy Spirit shall be my spirit ; Thy heaven shall be my hope.

Having said that, child, you must do all that conscience bids you, for it is Christ's voice. That is the secret of life, the secret of balance, of strength which is loyal and of honour which compels.

Alas ! I can only write these cold words when I ought to say them. The things of God need the living voice for their communication, the breath of the living creature as it were.

That was a warm-hearted and trustful letter you received from little Victorine. Teach her the secret of duty. She loves you ; now teach her to love that which passes not away. Love of the creature is vain ; the only solid love is that of God Who is in us.

I work and pray with a heart, strange to say, at once broken and rejoicing, crushed and vigilant, stricken with death yet unconquered.

God has caused me to die to a multitude of interests, yet with the result that I am increasingly conscious of Him, and therefore live with greater fulness of life.

I would I could impart this life to those I love. Were it not that I tremble to undertake to speak of it, even to those who are most dear to me, I feel sure that I should not utter empty phrases, but should lay bare the mystery of my conscience.

Father L. arrived yesterday. He is a good man, and in spite of the difference between our opinions, we shall be good friends. Corbara will be a dismal place for him, but I hope it may become as pleasant, or at least as supportable, as it is to me.

It is one of the advantages of having suffered martyrdom that you do not feel the fire any more. Good-bye, my dearest daughter. Be worthy of the

gifts of God, both in His sight and Christ's and in that of your Father. I give you my blessing with the love of the Crucified.

P.S.—I have had a nice letter from Hélène de P. in which she says, 'I want Thérèse to know that I am *absolutely* at her service for *anything*.' Timid as ever, even with you, she did not venture to say this to you herself. Now my commission is done. Good-bye.

126

Corbara: July 19, 1881.

My dear Child,—On St. Henry's Day you prayed for me with redoubled earnestness, and to-day—St. Mary Magdalene—I shall pray more than ever, if it be possible, for you, and that my desires for you may be fulfilled.

You will find neither peace nor strength save in entire self-surrender to Christ. This is hard, no doubt, and demands for its accomplishment grace and unswerving faith; but better are the pains unspeakable of sacrifice than the despairing pains of hearts too late awakened.

There are joys even in sacrifice, for by suffering we grow better and are able to perceive eternal life. Earthly joys are vain, whatever names you may give them. They are not worth an ounce of suffering, for, so far from satisfying, they starve; to us, living souls, they give the impression of eternal death.

I feel this more and more as my exile lengthens. I am like a man descending the steps of his tomb one at a time; who, as it grows dark behind him, descries in front the light of the other world. So it is that the more I am lost sight of by the world, the more closely do I find God near.

Ah ! cruel fate of life, echoing with our sobs. We are not able to look steadily into the abyss to which the justice and mercy of God consign us ; it makes the brain reel.

What we know for certain is that Christ is our example ; and that, in following in His footsteps, suffering and resigned, we are sure of rendering glory to God, and good to men, and of obtaining for ourselves eternal life. I desire you may be guided by this Spirit.

I have only one tie to life left : that is, to help some few souls to escape the Flood and take refuge in the Ark. That is the thread that binds me to the earth. God has broken all the rest.

The zeal with which I work is due to my desire to know better that truth, whose full revelation will be the joy of our lives in the Spirit ; so that I may disclose it more perfectly to those I love who hunger for it; and that I may defend it better in this hostile world where it meets and causes so much strife.

After that, there is nothing more for me to do.

This then, my dear only daughter, is the divine work in the human soul. What strength we need to lead our life aright, shirking nothing and spoiling nothing, maintaining our integrity in the sight of God !

Man can do nothing : his strength is in God alone. When he learns to surrender himself entirely and to lose himself in God, seeking His will alone, he has obtained the secret of victory ; but if, fancying he is strong, he rely upon his inherent energy, his plans, shrewdness, and pitiful cleverness, then, sooner or later, he comes to grief, and is tossed aside as useless.

May the Spirit of Christ draw you in this direction, my child, whatever may be the outward circumstances of your life.

You must really take care of yourself, as this hot weather is dangerous. Do not drink very cold liquids, nor get overtired when walking in the sun, else you will certainly suffer for it, and you have neither the right nor the time to fall ill, my only daughter. I hope your indisposition is trifling and will soon be over; but, remember, you must not play with fire.

As for me, I am valiantly roasting on my rock. There is not a drop—I don't say of rain, but even of dew—in this poor Corsica. The nights are as parched as the days, and the stars here have no tears in their eyes: they are fiery eyes which stare at you with no suspicion of tears.

But I have a great friend who stands up for me. Good Mt. Sant' Angelo affords me limpid, cool water in which I bathe twice a day. It comes from a spring and is caught in a cemented tank, and so I am refreshed, thanks to my kind friend who gives me the best he has. Thus I can keep on working as I did in the spring, and my research work continues.

Good-bye, my only daughter. I shall say Mass to your intention on the 22nd. It is in Christ alone that I see you, desire you, and bless you.

127

Corbara: August 1881.

My dear only Daughter,—I have just telegraphed to you what seems to me the wisest course to pursue.

Since you think you ought not to stay at Mantes, which invites you and does its best to keep you, it only remains for you to accept Russia—a post offering

you great advantages. This course does not bind you ; it leaves the way open in the future.

Therefore I firmly believe, my dear only daughter, that you will be acting wisely, and that you will have the blessing of God.

There is one thing I want to say to you ; it is that time is short, and that our life is but a breath. Self-sacrifice is alone of any worth, and by it we gain such peace as the dead enjoy ; yes, the dead ; for who are more peaceful than they ?

If the earth were rent, they would not wake from their last sleep. Nothing will make them open their stiffened eyelids ; no ray of light will shine into their stony glassy eyes. God received their last breath ; in Him the dead are alive, and beneath this awful sleep is a life lived in Christ. This life, unknown to men, makes these denizens of the tomb citizens of eternity.

Good-bye, my child. I bless you tenderly. May the power of God be your aid.

128

Corbara : September 17, 1881.

The new disposition of circumstances opening up before you, my dear only daughter, seems to me full of promise, for which we ought to thank God.

Strive to rise to the level of your duties and do not attempt to find the moral force you need in any human sentiment or affection. Moral force, as I have often told you, is in Christ only, and Christ is with them that believe in Him.

Everything earthly, passionate, personal, and selfish is doomed to perish ; it is the inevitable law. Nothing

lives but what is orderly and therefore pruned and in a condition of virtue.

Be what my faith ever dreams you; let your heart seek its satisfaction not in relations which lead to nothing, but in utter obedience to conscience. Those who welcome sacrifice grow thereby; all human affections are illusory and vain unless God is their sanction. Walk in this path, my dear only daughter; it will bring you closer to my sad life. The only union of souls possible is that accomplished by their inclusion in the same Spirit. May Christ give you courage to do right and assist you in your new life.

I pray for you, dear child, without ceasing, that Christ will enable you to become an heroic Christian soul. Good-bye. I give you my blessing.

129

Paris, 28 Rue St-Guillaume: October 26, 1881.

My Child,—In deepest faith I pray Christ to give you His strength and peace. You need it indeed if you are to fulfil your whole duty, for no human creature can be of real assistance to you in your trying work.

God has brought me back to the fatherland just as He was directing you into distant exile.

Dear child, the only joy in this world lies in embracing the ineffable will of God.

I have brought Corbara with me spiritually. Though I move in the midst of the world which I am called to evangelize, I shall still dwell on the rock where Christ caused me to die in Him.

I look to man for nothing. My only ambition is to save some, less by word than by deeds of sacrifice;

for every true apostle must suffer crucifixion. My Calvary awaits me, and I march on towards it with peace and courage. In January I shall go to pray at my mother's grave; then I have received permission to go to Germany to finish my studies in the Divinity of Jesus Christ; and the following autumn I shall set out for the Holy Land. I have taken a voluntary vow of silence and solitary work.

Life goes by so quickly; the work to do for God is immense. At any rate, when the Saviour comes, may He find us standing tools in hand and with lighted lamps.

I am so glad that you and Mlle. T. have become friends. Do not forget that the way to influence those who are entrusted to your care is to shed around you the holy odour of sacrifice and virtue, and to give the praise to God to Whom you have devoted your life, and for Whom you are determined to live.

Courage, my only child! May Christ bless you and (I repeat) grant you His divine power and His peace.

130

Munich: August 27, 1882.

Thank you, dear child, for going to pray at my mother's grave. The dead watch and look for us. On the road of my harsh destiny this grave stands like a mile-stone marking my course. How many things I have buried there! May she be to you, as far as it is possible, what she has been to me!

You have reached a point at which you must consider life as it really is, and not expect from this earth and from men what neither of them can give.

You have reached a point at which you must needs place first the will of God revealed by Christ, where you must barter all worldly dreams and realities for the divine reality to which death is leading us.

My earnest desire is to devote what remains of my life to bearing true witness of my faith in Christ in the sight of my fellows, so void of faith and full of their science; then death is all I want.

That is the sum of my ambition, which is really greater than it looks, and entails more sacrifices than are at first apparent.

I am starting for Tübingen, which will, I expect, be my last halting-place; but I do not suppose I can cross the Rhine and arrive in Paris before the end of September.

May Christ keep you in His faith, which is given you for strength to fight yourself, for self-denial, and good works towards all. May my mother help you, as I feel she watches and assists my poor life. Good-bye. I bless you, my only daughter, from a heart deeply affectionate, yet offered to God.

131

La Bussière: April 23, 1884.

My dear Daughter,—I have been spending a few peaceful days, yet days of great and sacred feeling, at my mother's grave. In this little obscure place, so important to me, I seem to meet her again, alive, who is no more. Her spirit encompasses me; I fall into communion with her more perfectly. I am at peace again, having forgotten the noise of human strife: I shall quit this place refreshed, and strengthened to endure the struggles which await me.

I have often thought of you during this time,

especially at my mother's grave where you have prayed and loved.

I am so glad to have seen the home of your friend Lucie, her husband and children: it attracted me immensely. I shall be passing through on Friday, and shall pay them a little visit between trains. Lucie is a woman above the average.

As to your future, my daughter, it is difficult for me to give you judicious advice. Consider thoroughly the various schemes, then explain them to me, and I will let you know which I think the best.

That delightful wish of Hélène's shows both her cleverness and ingenuity; everything that has to do with her is delicately beautiful and odorous. But, as a matter of fact, we must do our best with things as they are, and use such means as exist in the service of God and our friends.

I shall be in Paris on Saturday. Directly I arrive I shall set to work on my Life of Christ, and this divine work will be my life.

Good-bye, my daughter. My love and blessing to you. I know what I am to you. Ever yours in Christ.

132

Flavigny: July 21, 1884.

My dear Daughter,—There is only one happiness I know of in this world which is not illusory, and which feeds the deepest longings of our hearts—self-sacrifice such as Christ's.

. . . . . .

I am very fond of Flavigny in spite of its present emptiness. It is still alive though half-populated. After twenty eight years here I am back again,

safeguarded by God and still faithful to the youthful aspirations which carried me far hence; and though now I am fettered and silent, my sword at rest, still I know and feel that such is the will of God.

I shall spend the rest of July in this solitude; I need quiet. The corpse-like odour of crowds makes me ill; from time to time I have to go far away from them, very far and very high.

This little place is full of silence; one might be in another world. Solitude, which damps some spirits, raises mine. I am really enlivened by God alone; created beings make me dull. That is why it is such a good thing to give them up, for while you seem to be in a state of deadness you are really made to live a hundredfold more abundantly.

May St. Mary Magdalene protect you. She is the ideal penitent. May she be your ideal, for none is more sublime.

You tell me, dear child, you are trying to find a way of being of use to those you love. Well, there is one very good and simple way, though difficult. Endeavour more and more that your heart may be free, your will sincere, your soul unshackled from all that debases, your whole nature such as Christ wills and His Spirit enables us to be.

Good-bye, my daughter. I bless you with profound affection.

133

Vichy: August 4, 1884.

My dear Daughter,—It is St. Dominic's Day: I am sad and heartbroken at the thought of this great Order dispersed and powerless. It is like a noble tree, parched and stricken by drought. A

vigorous young shoot grew up, but was killed off by the old bark and the force of the storm.

We must pray: God lives, and His Spirit gives life to all those of good will. Christ lives, and, spite of all, His breath reanimates those who do not withdraw themselves from its mighty breezes. In fact, I know and feel in the very depths of my consciousness that nothing is more living than He.

I received your letter the day before I left Flavigny, and was unable to reply. I have been braced up by the solitude and calm of my old monastery, and have left it with a renewal of peace and good resolutions. I am at Vichy for another fortnight. I began my little course of treatment last Friday, and am feeling really well.

You ask me to explain the Parable of the Unjust Steward. It contains difficulties, especially to those who do not know how to read the Great Book; but these disappear, at least I think so, when you go into the question thoroughly. Open your Bible at St. Luke xvi. The parable is contained in the first nine verses; the other four, up to verse thirteen inclusive, having been merely added as moral precepts relating to the instruction conveyed by the parable.

Now, distinction must be made between two elements of this method of teaching practised by the Master; the material element, which is the illustration adduced; and secondly, the moral drawn from the illustration.

In the first of these often occur details which have no bearing on the moral to be drawn, and which simply serve to give picturesqueness and force to the narrative. In order to understand the parables, it is necessary to confine one's attention to the practical truth exhibited. Now, what is the truth in the

present case? It is vigorously expressed in the ninth verse: 'And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of this world's goods (the mammon which tempts to iniquity), that they may receive you when you die into everlasting habitations.'

Those who are really good, that is, generous and benevolent, using their money for the good of others, rather than for their own ends, gain friends not only among those they help, who are often ungrateful, but among the beings who are in God's presence and with whom we shall live one day when death opens the door to the everlasting habitations.

What are we intended to remark in the illustration adduced? Certainly not the injustice of this thieving, cunning steward, but his prudence and care in making friends at this crisis brought about by his former carelessness.

His master praises him for having acted prudently. We must be quite clear as to what we understand by the words 'praise' and 'prudently.' I think a good though homely translation of the sense of the passage would be something like this: What a clever fellow to get so well out of a scrape!

The moral is at once seen. Employ in your spiritual interests that cleverness, ability, and forethought which you display in your earthly, human interests.

Alas! it is not so. As the Gospel says with profound wisdom, the children of darkness are in their life more prudent than the children of light.

Therefore I cannot accept Madeleine's explanation, because an explanation which is not warranted by the text is always arbitrary, and an arbitrary explanation is no explanation at all.

God alone gives life, dear child! We do not die

of our sacrifices; it is earthly enjoyments which stifle and kill.

What a mystery man is! Terrible forces push him downwards to choke and die for lack of air, and he is bound to go down unless the living Spirit of Christ bear him up.

Salvation is of God, not of ourselves. Predestination is a fact, terrible yet glad, which there is no denying. It is God, it is Christ alone Who saves us.

. . . . . .

I can do no more than write you these few halting words and offer you the example of my life, my rough, stormy life, sustained and guided by Christ alone Who knows it. I do not know it, for I walk blindfold, seeing but a few paces in front. Sometimes I come all at once on a quagmire, a sharp turn or a chasm, but I must needs go right on. Nevertheless, in moments of difficulty, an invisible angel, a kind yet irresistible power, sustains us and we go forward.

Pray; read the Bible; be a disciple of the Crucified. I bless you and lovingly commend you to Christ.

134

Vichy: August 18, 1884.

We can only thank God, my daughter, for the peaceful and good death of poor little Gabrielle L.

The last hours of life are worth years to the enlightened conscience; the soul is then purified by the fires of death and love; it must be terrible yet sweet. Father Mercier accomplished a holy work during those last hours, and it will stand to his account hereafter.

We who remain here have to bear the heavy and

wearisome toil and burden day by day ; but the Spirit of Christ is our aid, and by His help we accomplish what seems impossible.

We upraise from earth this sluggish nature of ours which weighs us down and imprisons us, till presently our wings begin to grow. When they are quite strong, we too will fly away.

We must be filled with the devouring spirit of the Gospel. Earth has nothing worth our possessing ; we are forced to look higher in order to find the substance of our hopes, the essence of our aspirations.

In fact, the problem is always the same—continually to conquer self, to set self aside, to be ever watchful, and to grow in grace.

Remember, my daughter, that you can do nothing good and Christlike without self-abnegation ; and that this voluntary stretching oneself on the Cross is impossible except by the power of the Spirit of Christ, Who is given to those who know their miserable condition and cry to Him in their despair.

I want this thought to be a light in your life, and therefore I have written it ; for me it is an imperative duty to keep proclaiming it.

I shall leave Vichy on the 20th or 21st, and shall be in Paris in little more than a week.

Good-bye till we meet. I bless you from the depth of my heart, my daughter, and it will not be my fault if you do not become a true Christian, a disciple of Christ, having resolutely thrown overboard all the vanities of this world.

135

Paris : November 6, 1884.

My dear Daughter,—I am so glad to hear you are settled, and what you write about your situation sounds excellent. It depends on yourself now to make the best of it.

Age and experience will bring to your life as a whole, and to your conduct in all particulars, that gravity and composure which inspire respect and confidence. When that is effected you will not be far short of perfection, and I shall be quite proud of my daughter.

But you may be sure that more than human effort is needed to approach this. Our nature cannot be overcome apart from the deep religious impulse of the living Spirit of Christ. Otherwise we are under the yoke of our own character and personal emotions, and life goes by in a monotonous round of the same troubles, the same faults.

For the last three weeks I have been occupying our new rooms in the Rue d'Assas. The view of the fine trees in the Luxembourg Garden, which I love to gaze at from my big windows, refreshes me while I am at work and brightens the hours of my laborious solitude.

My Life of Christ necessitates many references and much original work. Just now I am far away in India, with Brahma and Buddha, a knowledge of whom is necessary for purposes of comparison.

A much clearer view of the divine Person of Christ is obtained as He stands amongst those who have a name in the history of human religion.

I still keep up my little addresses on Sundays at Rue Saint-Lazare, where I was pleased to see you. At

these reunions I give my spirit free course in exhortations to some few people at close quarters. It is helpful to me as well as to them.

It is an age since I heard from little M. I have no doubt she is progressing in the path in which I desire to see her, as I do you.

Good-bye, my daughter. I bless you from the bottom of my heart, and only wish I could keep you closer by me! Yours.

136

Paris: January 1, 1885.

My dear Daughter,—I send you my affectionate good wishes. Stand up to the difficulties of life, and increase in Christ by triumphing gradually over the evil which grips us. It seems to me that you have obtained a good post which you may be able to render still better, and that you see your way to doing good to others while reaping benefit from it yourself.

I have nothing new to tell you, so far as my affairs are concerned. I live buried in my solitary work, and the days go by unnoticed, bringing no change to my studious, quiet existence.

The world of to-day flings along, taking a course directly away from God and all religion. The Church possesses few men capable of withstanding this awful torrent, irresistible as the rising tide.

Nevertheless, I am convinced that the plan of Providence is being worked out on our little earth, and that nothing can frustrate its execution, though we, in our short life, cannot descry its enormous scope.

Some time or other, God will again draw men to Himself under the aspect of Moral Law; for it will

become evident that, though earthly science may be able to give man power over this world, it is helpless in the matter of influencing conscience and controlling free existences. God alone is the Ruler of such; apart from Him they are unregulated and selfish.

Those men in our day who are engrossed with science and liberty will learn this from experience. Then bright days will dawn on this earth, where poor creatures do nothing but kill one another.

I saw Lucie a few days ago. Of course we chatted about you and regretted you were not with us. She is brave and faithful as ever. Good-bye, my daughter. I give you my blessing with my love, and am yours in Christ.

137

Paris: March 30, 1885.

My dear Daughter,—No, I have not forgotten you, but I feel quite sure of you and know that you are settling down. We must let grace do its work; just as we leave clocks alone to tell the time by their own action, instead of pushing the hands round with our fingers.

These impressions are confirmed by your letter, and as your health is good, in spite of the Russian winter, I gather that your soul has not been worrying your heart and the rest of you.

Maintain peace; keep your life high above passing events. Yes, of course we may love what is good and beautiful, even among finite things; but we must beware of becoming the slave of what we love.

Discern the spirits, and have to do only with the good. They will not bring you into bondage, but

will hold out a friendly hand, and will be at your side in times of distress.

You ask me for a meditation on the Passion, my dear child. You know quite well that I am no writer, and that all I can do is to say a few halting words . . . besides, I am gradually losing this power in this life of silence allotted me by God.

A single look at the suffering and dying Christ is more instructive than the most eloquent sermon of Bossuet or any other master. As for me, the sight of Jesus crucified is my life; He it is that gives me courage to suffer, resignation in trials, certitude in my hopes which nothing can extinguish. I cannot, indeed, understand—even by faith—the awful mystery of universal suffering, but I bow my head before it. I have faith in Christ Who has drunk of our bitter cup, and I can believe that it is good since He has done so. This makes me gentle; I quench in His blood my indignation, my anger, my desire of revenge, and learn to become as the sheep which, when shorn by the shearers, is dumb.

There is an infinite sweetness underlying our afflictions when we bear them with Christ. All this, dear child, must be experienced before it can be known. Pray that this experience may be given you; for, however hard it may be, you will never regret it, nor think you have bought its ineffable revelations at too high a price.

I strongly advise you to take full advantage of your capital post and make the very most of it. This will entail certain painful sacrifices, but we obtain nothing here below without that.

My life still continues laborious yet peaceful. My work on Jesus Christ advances very slowly, and I shall think myself fortunate if the first

volume—the History of Jesus—is ready in eighteen months' time.

Till the first volume is finished I shall enter no pulpit in Paris nor in the provinces. I feel that it is a moral duty to act on this principle. I have no fresh news of any of our friends. The little nest at Chambéry lies still in peace under the shadow of the Alps. Poor Father M. is still stranded on the same shore, and does not know what will become of him. I can do nothing for him.

As to Pauline de M., she will have told you about her last storms. Storms are needed sometimes to clear and cool the air.

Well, my dearest daughter, go on living so that the world may not swallow you up. Pray for me, as I pray for you. I am sending you by this post an address on Marriage which I hope the Russian post will deliver safely.

Good-bye. I send you my blessing and love in Christ.

138

Paris: July 15, 1885.

My dear Daughter,—I have received your note and good wishes for my fête-day. Many thanks for your filial remembrance. But indeed how could you fail to remember sacred dates? Is it in the power of a human soul to forget and efface the marks caused by the divine flame by which it has been penetrated, renewed, preserved? I am assured that you are being kept by God and in spite of all—in spite of your restlessness, of the impulses of your emotional temperament—grace rules you, and will rule you more and more.

This work goes on without human intervention,

and I am certain that any personal action of mine is unnecessary.

But my soul is ever inclined towards you, and I never cease to pray Christ that His living Spirit may transform you into His likeness. I hope I have been an instrument of divine power in your life ; the means, under God, of all the best you have received. You also are convinced of this, and that is why, dear child, those indissoluble ties between our souls have been formed which neither time nor absence is able to break or even loosen.

There is nothing of interest to chronicle in my life. It is a sort of underground existence, filled entirely by my work on the Life of Jesus. I went into Dauphiné in May, as you know, and stayed a whole month there, as I was detained by a wedding which I was asked to bless. Though leading a Benedictine life, I still have one favourite theme for the exercise of eloquence, viz. marriage addresses. I have already composed two this year : they have been printed on good paper, and I even think I sent you a copy of one. But the Russian post cannot be trusted, and it may have kept it, just as it made away with the letter you mention in your last which never reached me.

Lucie has told you of the nice quiet day I spent at Chambéry. Their little home is charming, and your friend's soul brightens it every day with sunshine ever warmer and more divine.

On Saturday I start for Normandy. I am going to take the place of a *curé* who has a little parish of two hundred souls. It is called Huguerville. I preached there last year at a First Communion. I shall sing the Mass ; I shall bless holy water and *pain bénit*. On Sundays I shall go into the pulpit

for the sermon, I shall baptize, visit the sick, in short I shall try to be a good pastor.

There is only one unalloyed pleasure in this world, to do good; the only heroism is in bearing men's ingratitude, after Christ's example, without loving them any less.

I shall be back about the middle of August, when no doubt we shall meet in Paris.

Good-bye, my dear daughter. Be happy in the good you are doing. Be joined to Christ; He alone can console, strengthen, and upraise you to the divine life. Pray for him who loves you as Christ wills we should love one another. In faith I send you my blessing and love.

139

Paris: December 26, 1885.

My dear Daughter,—I have just received your little letter, written with such a trembling hand as if indeed death had brushed you with his icy wing.

But no, you live and will live. I was deeply touched as I read that letter; I pray for you and only regret that I cannot look after you and help you in my own person. My best point is that of helping those who are ill. I am a born doctor or nurse—a binder of wounds.

Arise; look at God, not at death. Take up your life again, and how short it is compared with the divine work given us to do! Mine seems to me like a stream which has vanished beneath the sands. But what matter? It is going whither God directs it.

Take care of yourself, and allow yourself to be treated like a little child. Let me hear from you soon, and tell me whether you are coming to regain strength under your native sky.

I write no more for fear of wearying you. I give you my blessing, as being my dearest daughter, and commend you into the hands of Christ.

140

Paris : March 17, 1886.

My dear Daughter,—I affectionately present to you Father L., who is the bearer of this letter. Do what you can to be of service to him. Anything you can do will be as though you had done it for me. He is my constant and brotherly friend, and I have the greatest esteem and affection for him. What has become of you ?

The D.'s told me that you thought of leaving Russia, and that you were quite recovered. Let me have news of you ; even if I do not write, that is no reason why you should not. I remain in the same place in your firmament ; you know there are some fixed stars above the rolling earth.

No change in my life of silence and work ; I have no history. My life is made up of events of conscience which fill it up without making any sound.

I am still ceaselessly at work on my ' Life of Jesus Christ,' and I am making arrangements for a fresh journey to the East at the end of the year. I let my beard grow, and that gives me a venerable appearance. However, my soul remains young and ardent despite the fulness of the suns which begin to tinge the first leaves of autumn.

Do you know that Lucie has *hopes* ? You will be there to take part in the child's baptism and to share the joys of their charming home.

Good-bye. I envy the lot of these lines which will be in Petersburg on Sunday.

I give you my blessing and send with this letter all my fatherly love, my daughter.

141

Paris : April 23, 1886.

My dear Daughter,—I am happy to think that you do not lose sight of the real object of this poor earthly life; that you do not revolve in the same monotonous circle of troubles, despondency, griefs, and illusions of which it consists.

It is with effort that we have to develop what is divine within us, what is eternal, what earth stifles and harasses, but cannot destroy.

The spiritual work, accomplished by conscience in a region remote from man's scrutiny, is the real object of our life. I am still fully occupied in the study and contemplation of Christ.

He is indeed a consuming God Who has laid hold of me. He utterly absorbs me during this silent period of my life. Without Him I should die or at least wither away, for He is my sustenance and my strength. I feel the loneliness of the exile; the only echo to my voice comes as I speak to Christ, and to the few faithful hearts who dwell in Him with me.

But every day I experience the support afforded inwardly by this marvellous Being, and in Him I find peace, stability, strength, and hope for the future.

My work is not nearly finished, but I keep on with perseverance through alternating periods of inclination and languor.

The miner who cuts his underground gallery does not always find the rock soft; it offers resistance

to his blows. I am like a miner, but I never go on strike. My Master allows me to share profits, and my work is always splendidly paid.

Father L. tells me how kind you have been to him. I hope you will still continue to aid him to the best of your ability, and to help forward his ministry over there. He has suffered much, and in affording him your support you will be doing a good work. I am getting ready in good time for my journey to Palestine, which, however, will not take place till the end of September or October. When you come to Paris, you will find me quite an Oriental with my Arab beard.

Good-bye, my daughter. Do not cease to pray, to read the Bible, and to keep your soul in faith close to Christ. Thus we shall be more closely united. My blessing and love to my only daughter.

142

Paris: June 25, 1886.

My Daughter,—I am awaiting you. How glad I shall be to see you after your long exile! I shall be in Paris till July 10. After that date I shall only make brief appearances there, and in the first week of October I shall definitely start for the Holy Land.

Come, therefore. I stretch out my hand to meet you and give you my blessing.

143

Paris: July 26, 1886.

My dear Daughter,—I have returned from my Alpine trip. I climbed a peak more than 2,000

metres high, crossing a *col* of more than 2,500 metres strewn with rocks and snow. I have been drinking in my mountain air with greediness, having shaken off the dust of the lower world of man. I have beheld heaven more near, and men from above. I prayed, I sang for joy, and would fain live up there, far above the pines and larches, in the full sunshine at the base of inaccessible peaks; living on the water from the glaciers and the milk of my sheep and goats.

Alas! it is an empty dream. I must live amidst men, must struggle, watch, hope, agonise, and ultimately die. But to me to die is gain; death will satisfy my infinite desire to live.

On my return journey I was able to stop a couple of hours at Chambéry. Poor Lucie was getting impatient for the arrival of what she has been expecting. She would have liked me to baptize it. It arrived at last on St. Mary Magdalene's Day—a beautiful child, they say—asking no more than a place in the sunshine.

How I should like to be able to transport you, my daughter, to some Alpine peak! At such altitudes you seem to be caressed by a breath divine. Immense peace falls into the soul, filling it with joy and satisfaction, power and peace.

I am remaining only five or six days more in Paris, as the wedding is fixed for the 31st. I shall probably leave the same evening, or the next day at latest, for Huguerville (near Andelys, Eure).

I shall not find the bracing air of the Alps there; but I shall enjoy the unruffled atmosphere of the woods on an upland swept by the fresh breezes. There I intend to work, and I shall lead a flock of 200 sheep.

V. and her fiancé called on me lately. He has the manner of a young girl—gentle and timid—while she, on the contrary, has the bluff, self-reliant air of a young man. They are in love with each other and it is a love-match, so they are perfectly happy. We talked of you, and I promised V. to give you news of her. She is expecting you on the wedding-day.

The extract from X.'s letter which you sent me is interesting.

You will soon see, my poor daughter, how limited a man is who has nothing of the divine in him.

Good-bye, and perhaps not for long. Rest and pray. By prayer we climb the great divine mountain, those heights compared with which earthly mountains are mere hummocks.

My desire for you is that your soul may be fixed above, and that you may despise the things which pass away. My love to you in Christ crucified.

144

Flavigny-sur-Ozerain: September 17, 1886.

My Child,—I am at Flavigny, you see, preparing my wings for the long journey. I shall not be back in Paris till September 28. I should like to see you before I leave, which will be on October 5. On the 6th or 7th I shall be at Chambéry, then I shall visit my mother's grave, then on to Grenoble, Marseilles, and so to sea.

My silence does not mean forgetfulness of you. I pray God may watch over you and raise you high above transitory things.

My prayer to Christ is that He will bring you to those lofty heights where I dwell, by less painful paths than those I had to tread.

We shall meet soon, my dear daughter. Always yours in the God Whom we worship.

145

La Bussière: October 8, 1886.

My dear Daughter,—I have just been praying at my mother's grave and speaking to her of all those I love. My mother's soul seems indeed a power and a divine light in my life and in the lives of my friends. Repeat these words to Lucie and Émile.

So far have I flown already, but my spirit remains where I was, and I know that neither distance nor absence causes any hindrance to the union of spirits which live in the light and love of God.

Pray for me, and may the little angel who bears the name of an archangel fold his hands in prayer for us. Though his lips cannot pray, yet his hands can follow his mother's prayer.

A hearty kiss and a stamp for little Magdalene. I have received my cape; many thanks to Émile.

Good-bye. I give you my blessing, and also to the little household.

146

Cairo: December 1, 1886.

My dear Daughter,—I am still in Egypt, having been detained longer than I had expected by the slight illness of one of my travelling companions. I leave for Port Said to-morrow, and Sunday morning at eight o'clock I shall be at Jaffa.

I am longing to enter Palestine at last, and to see again Christ's country, which is of greater and livelier interest to me than this land of the Pharaohs, marvellous though it is.

I leave Egypt deeply impressed by all it has been granted me to see. I have been up the Nile to the First Cataract as far as Assouan, which is 1,200 kilometres from Cairo. My feelings were those of amazement rather than admiration. It is impossible to describe the effect produced by this strange, noble scenery; by the light which clothes everything with gold; the clear atmosphere in which every detail is exquisitely outlined to the eye; this Nile valley narrowed by two chains of mountains, Lybian and Arabian, which escort you continuously like two gigantic walls of superb work, now carved into pyramids, now terraced, now gently sloping, now truncated at the apex, but always fearfully bare and dry, with nothing for the eye to rest on but sheer rock—no shade, not a plant or a flower, nothing but the blinding light.

Just along the banks of the river is a strip of green corn-land, irrigated by the strong, hard-working *fellah*. Here and there can be seen tufts of palm-trees, with their graceful leaves and golden dates. Scattered at distances in the sand are islands formed by the Nile in its course, with groups of ibis, storks, and pelicans which stand absolutely motionless, and watch you as you pass. Then there is the cloudless sky, innocent of any moisture, which seems to wrap you in its blue splendour. After seeing all this for days and weeks, you are seized at last by an impression of enormous power. One feels paralysed, fascinated, cowed by this Nature which seems to rest motionless in her calm, prodigious serenity.

I visited the old temples on both banks: Dendera, Abydos, Luxor, Karnak, Memnon's Column, Edfoo, and Philae. It is impossible to imagine anything more striking than these ruins, more mysterious than

these ancient sanctuaries. As I studied them, I understood the Jewish symbolism whose elements I found assembled here, and Solomon's Temple which is constructed after the plan of Egyptian temples. To obtain information one must travel. Tell Father L. this, and tell him also that man is created for a life of freedom, and that I feel tenfold stronger since I laid aside the heavy antiquated harness of our European civilisation.

I have seen Georgette a great deal during my stay in Cairo. She is happy with her husband, but dislikes the climate of Egypt, which makes her quite ill. She asked me to send you her love.

I shall be at, or near, Jerusalem at the beginning of January, and shall need all the intervening time for my work. At the end of February I hope to be in Damascus, and shall not be back in Paris until the first week of March.

God have you in His keeping, dear child, and grant you understanding of the Spirit of the Gospel which is my life, and of which I am about to drink at the source in the very country where this source sprang forth. Good-bye. Give Lucie news of me, and to Father L. my kind regards. I bless you with unchanging love. Yours.

147

Jerusalem : January 26, 1887.

My dear Daughter,—I entered Palestine on December 5, and Jerusalem on the 17th. In renewing acquaintance with this land which Christ has filled with His presence, I am even more deeply impressed than at my first visit. Great things are inexhaustible ; the nearer one approaches them the

more they increase; the more one studies them the deeper they grow. The soul expands at contact with them. With what emotion I kissed the rock where the Cross was planted and where Jesus died; the stone, too, on which He was laid to be enveloped in the grave-clothes and spices; and the tomb in which He willed to sleep in death three days!

At Jerusalem I have followed in His steps through the court of the Temple, where He so often spoke, taught, disputed, and prayed; at Bethany, along the side of the Mount of Olives, whither He loved to retire far from the noisy town; to the Kedron Valley; to Gethsemane, the scene of His awful Agony; to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which He crossed after His arrest, and where His foot struck against a stone in the rocky bed; to the house of Annas and Caiaphas, where He was buffeted; along the Sorrowful Way, still red with His Blood to my imagination.

These places have an immense effect on my mind. As I gaze at them, alone and in meditation, I feel Christ present; I see Him, touch Him, hear His voice. He is there, standing before my eyes in flesh and blood, in the reality of His human nature. He inspires me, filling me with Himself, and I gladly surrender myself to the action of the divine rays which proceed from Him. I want my book to be warm and living, full of Oriental colour and true to facts; and, therefore, I let myself soak in this dazzling light which fills the sky. I set myself to describe the Gospel places to the best of my ability, and I am attempting to supply to the bare facts of our Lord's life all those surroundings which were in existence; ignorance of these robs the facts of half their significance.

Most of those who have written the Life of Jesus

either did not love that life, or, if they loved it, failed to understand its essentially human character. The former, therefore, produced an uninteresting and sometimes blasphemous result; the latter, a lifeless study.

Pray, my daughter, that I may be successful in displaying to the men of our day a living image of Christ, at once human and divine. Then I will gladly quit this life, having yielded my fruit and accomplished my salvation.

Since I have been in Jerusalem, I have made a long excursion beyond the Jordan into the mountains of Moab, on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, and elsewhere in the former territory of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Here I was in real Bedouin country. I have lived and travelled with them; and in their midst, beneath the goat-skin tents, have tasted the flavour of the simple patriarchal life, proud and free. I have eaten rice with them in their fashion, rolled into balls and taken in the fingers, and have drunk the coffee without sugar, served as a mark of friendship in cups half-filled. I have even exchanged with them the *salâmalik*, which is performed by raising the hand to the forehead and then to the heart.

I have seen them mounted on their mares, swift as gazelles, bounding on the rocks and across the plains. I have been present at their meals and had their warlike speech translated to me. I have admired their manly type, and the long horsehair tresses hanging round their brow under the *kufish*. I rejoiced in filling my lungs with the desert air—the desert which was to me a second fatherland.

During this excursion I visited the ruins of Machaerus, where John the Baptist was beheaded by

Herod; Belnikon, where Balaam prophesied Israel's great future and viewed the mystic Star of Jacob; ancient Heshbon, which David entered in triumph; Mount Nebo ascended by Moses, and whence he gazed upon the land promised to his nation; Rabbath Ammon, the ancient Philadelphia of the Ptolemies; and Djerasch, which is the Gerasa or Gadara of the Bible. The ruins of these two latter places are superb. One can imagine nothing more pathetic than the sight of these half-demolished temples, with naked pillars rising from the desert like sentinels which seem to keep watch over the crumbling mass, and speak eloquently of the bloody struggles which rased an ancient civilisation with fire and sword.

Then I recrossed the Jordan at the point where it receives the waters of the Jabbok, the torrent whose bed was the scene of Jacob's dream of the ladder on which the angels of God ascended and descended; and I encamped on the very bank of the river which Christ hallowed. It was a magnificent night, with countless stars in a limpid, distant firmament.

The following day, I took the road leading from Tiberias to Jericho, so often trod by the feet of Christ. It runs at the foot of the mountains of Samaria and Judæa, through scenery of all descriptions, both smiling and severe, and for me was swarming with holy associations. They seemed to spring like the flowers, anemones red and lilies white, beneath the hoofs of my horse.

Now I am in Jerusalem, but only for a few days longer; I leave before the end of the month. I have still Samaria and Galilee to see, which will take about three weeks. At the end of February I shall be at Beyrout, and by the end of March in Paris.

Please read this letter to Father L.; it is to him

as well as to you. Tell him I have received his letter from Marseilles, that my friendly interest follows him into the fogs of Russia, and that I send him, as well as you, the best ray I can find of the sun of Palestine. On my return to France, I intend to retire to Sainte-Baume, to enjoy a life of solitude and freedom under a propitious sky ; far from the tumult and the worries of earth, I shall put in order the holy impressions received during my journey. I give you my blessing, my daughter, and my kind regards to Father L. May God aid, teach, and keep you ! Yours.

148

Flavigny : June 15, 1887.

My dear Daughter,—How glad you must be to be home again ! They who leave their country for a while, as I have, know how beautiful they find it on their return, and with what joy their hearts are filled.

I am back again to solitude, sheltered in this ancient monastery of Flavigny, whither I came thirty years ago *to die* ; and now God brings me back to it to write my ' Life of Christ.'

I love this retreat of silence and work. I am quite contented with my studies, my prayers and strivings in my hidden tomb. Long months must pass before I can finish the work ; but I have made up my mind to all sacrifices, to everything Christ may require of me.

If I succeed in depicting Him as I see and adore Him, my life will not have been wasted. Perhaps some, living now, will learn to know and love Him, and will gain from Him the grace of goodness and consolation in the midst of sorrows.

What has become of you? Where is the soul of Thérèse?

The soul, mark, for that is all that is immortal; the rest is but a dream. Tell me what has become of it.

I should so much like to see Father L. when he is passing through on his way to Paris or elsewhere. I should hardly be able to meet him there, but it could easily be managed at Dijon. The Bishop is very hospitable. Tell him this.

Also tell Lucie that I should have liked to see her at the house in Rue d'Assas, now closed. I am buried here like a miner in his pit. I am digging my tunnel, and shall only come out at the other end.

Good-bye, my dear child. Rest now that you are in France. Do not enter much into the whirlpool, and look higher than earth—very high! I bless you.

149

Flavigny: July 23, 1887.

My Child,—I am still hard at work in my cherished solitude at Flavigny, endeavouring, as I have already told you, to delineate Christ according to the conception formed by my adoring faith and illuminated reason.

I have just finished the chapter on the coming of Jesus. The Gospel narratives are poems in their beauty, simple as the Child of Whom they tell, yet profound as the Spirit Who inspired them. I am translating them into modern language, being careful, however, to keep undimmed that reflection from Eternal Brightness which raises them above the level of mere human literature.

Pray for me, my child; for to write worthily of Christ needs inspiration from above. Those who

approach the task from the point of view of their little unaided reason, offer an impoverished representation of Him; to make Him intelligible—*rational*, they call it—they shape His Figure to their own dimensions, producing, of course, a pitiful result.

I do not know what to say, dear child, about your plans for the future, because I am too far removed from the scene, and too ill-informed on the subject in discussion, to be able to give advice. What is important is that you spare your strength and save it up. I mistrust your generous and nobly reckless temperament.

Do not try to get S. married; no one should marry a person *faute de mieux*. Virtue and the lapse of time convert love into friendship. Many sacrifices, many grey hairs—these transform the volcano into the peaceful hearth.

Good-bye, my daughter. I give you my blessing from the bottom of my heart. Pray; look upward; love God; kneel at the feet of Christ, the only Being on Whom the heart of man or woman can rest in perfect security. Again good-bye. My kind regards to your mother.

150

Flavigny: August 25, 1887.

My dear Daughter,—It is understood then that I shall see you at Dijon on September 1. I still work bravely on and am happy in my work. I have no lack of inspiration, but it is a great undertaking, and I have not yet done a fifth of it. I reckon it will take me quite twenty months to finish.

What a drama life is, what movement, what storms! But I take pleasure in the struggle, even in its pains, for eternity is at the end of it all.

When you wrote to F. on the subject of love, why did you, who are of my way of thinking, omit to distinguish between Love, the passion, and Love, the grace; between the love which sways hither and thither in the sphere of natural instinct, and the love which is securely based on conscience and the soul?

Good-bye, my daughter. Rise ever higher towards Him, Who alone has overcome the love of the passions by transmuting it into love divine and unending. May God have you in His keeping. My blessing be with you.

151

Flavigny: September 12, 1887.

My Child,—I have just had exceedingly bad news. A letter from Mossoul tells me that Father Segonzac is dead. I am overwhelmed by this bereavement; for I have lost an old friend who was sincerely attached to me, and his death lies at my door. It was I who sent him there, who advised exile and a life of hardship which he was unable to bear. I had miscalculated his strength; less than three years has sufficed to wear him out. He fell sick of a fever about last June, grew feebler and feebler, and at last sank away on August 13.

Still, there is nothing to regret. The poor Father died in full faith, courage, and resignation.

Such is life, my poor Thérèse. We run to and fro; we struggle violently; we suffer, dream, and love; we wear ourselves out, and then—all is over as the last breath is yielded up. Is it worth while striking root in this earth when nothing lasts long? I, who am keenly alive in every maddening fibre, deliberately turn my back on the transitory to lay hold on the eternal.

If human things are but a dream, of what use are they, my poor child? It is the divine we need and whereby we live. It is this I seek in you and strive to cherish, that our souls may be in accord and speak the same eternal tongue.

No mortal power can change your nature, my daughter. He Who is Infinite has laid His mark upon you, and His you are in spite of all.

I feel that you have been committed to my charge, and in your darkest nights and most lowering days you will always see my shining gaze pointing you to God.

I write to you under the influence of the feelings which death always arouses in me when it strikes my friends, and you know well how frequent and painful have been its blows.

My work goes on in silence in spite of a thousand obstructions in my path. The figure of Christ dazzles me; I would fain depict Him with His sacred halo, that all who hunger and thirst after righteousness, justice, truth, or eternity may know Him as the Source of these. Come and slake your thirst, my daughter, and give me your aid.

This very morning I received the sweet *quintetto* from Chambéry, and seemed to hear Magdalene's angel-voice scattering celestial notes above your four voices. I thank you all: it has been a consolation to my grief. Good-bye. I place my hand upon your head, my daughter, and bless you.

I send you some fresh breezes, such as bear upon their wings serenity, strength, and the peace of God.

152

Baigneux-les-Juifs: September 22, 1887.

My Daughter,—Try to do good to all around you, help the suffering, support those who fall. I am afraid you will not be successful in consoling poor G. There are two powers in the presence of which we are impotent—Love and Death.

You must pray; only God can heal those who are wounded by love and death.

I am very quiet under my friend's hospitable roof. I love this great bare upland with its vast undulating horizon, though the scenery is full of melancholy. We drive somewhere every day to see a friend or relative and dine there with quite Burgundian zest. I like the gaiety of this fair, high-coloured race. This is a little relaxation before beginning work again. On Saturday I shall be back in my solitude, sitting in my workshop surrounded by my tools, alone with God in Flavigny, which I should so much like you to see.

Be assured, my child, that I am never forgetful of you. There are secret reasons for my occasional silence; but even when I do not write, you should hear a voice speaking to the very core of your being. Listen to it when it speaks.

Learn to be strong. Think about my great work which will be the result of continual sacrifices, both my own and of my friends. Help me, then, by yours which are most precious to me.

Good-bye, my daughter. I am ever with you, and you should feel my presence continually in that innermost part of your being which touches on Infinity. Yours.

153

Flavigny : November 2, 1887.

My dear Daughter,—You must not be impatient. I will write to you regularly a day or two after I receive your letters. I must have a margin of time ; I cannot write to you like a machine, but must think over what you say and what I ought to reply. Inspiration does not come by word of command ; waters welling up from the depths of the soul do not flow perennially. It is an intermittent spring, rising from a deep and inexhaustible source, which has its periods.

You must take these divine laws into consideration, my big child ; though I can dash off business letters without a pause, I must have time to consider and develop the thoughts which spring up in my heart.

Do you not see that the further I advance in my career, the closer I am bound by the chain of Christ, till at last it has grown part of my very flesh and bones ? More and more I am enslaved—a great free slave.

I lead an austere, companionless life. You have no idea of the savagery of this scenery. One needs the lungs of a mountaineer to breathe this air, and a good constitution which is satisfied with water from a mountain stream.

After all, it is Christ alone Who supports me ; I am sustained by His hope, His Spirit, His soul. How could I hope to write this Divine Life and set it forth unless it were pulsing in my veins ? If I ever return to the arena as God's champion, my dear daughter, I shall return, you see, in the strength of all my sacrifices, my long-drawn sufferings, and an infinite love of all that Christ loved.

I am by nature patient, persevering, and tireless. I am carried forward on my path by an invisible but resistless power which holds me in its grasp, and therefore I advance with closed eyes in full assurance that I shall be led whither my Guide would have me go.

My life lies in the invisible, the eternal. I can say this in all simplicity, just as I plainly think and feel it.

You, too, possess this divine gift which will manifest itself one day. Meanwhile, my daughter, do good in all manner of ways that are open to you; become mistress of yourself; approach suffering souls and speak to them of God, for He alone it is Who can restore the fallen.

You are still under the sway of illusions, but your soul is noble enough to learn their emptiness some day, and to yield itself to Him Who should alone possess us, Who alone can satisfy us.

I am at my sixth chapter which is going well. By to-morrow or the next day I shall have finished the description of the state of Jewish society in Palestine about the year 26 A.D., and against this background I shall throw the vigorous figure of John the Baptist. What a masterful face! What a character, austere yet sweet! What independence and loftiness of heart! It was his glorious destiny to sum up in his own person the aspirations of a whole nation; to be the first to understand that it was the Christ before them, and to point Him out to his fellow-men in strikingly dramatic fashion. I will read it to you one of these days.

I start for Paris on the 15th, and my address will be c/o Mère Samuel, 27 Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. I am conducting a Retreat there from

the 17th to the 21st, and return on the 22nd or 23rd.

Yes, be kind to E.; watch over him and teach him.

Please give my very kindest regards to Mme. Narishkine. She is one of those warm-hearted women whose sympathies lie with God's cause, and such can never be uninteresting or strangers to me.

Ah! if only D. were spiritual instead of being *earthy* and sceptical. The divine spark, which exists in every rightly constituted man, is hidden in him beneath a mass of ashes. Who will blow it into flame?

Good-bye, my dear Thérèse. I send you my blessing and my best love, my only daughter.

154

Flavigny: November 13, 1887.

My dear Child,—I am leaving for Paris two days earlier than I had intended. I had a telegram last night bearing the signatures of the Bishops of Vannes and Séez, and of Mère Samuel, saying, 'Come without fail to-morrow.' I obey the Bishops' call as representing a call from God.

I shall be away, my daughter, for about ten days; you will find me in Paris up to the 23rd or 24th. This journey will be some sort of relaxation after months of incessant hard work. I do not lament my lot; for, however hard it is, it still possesses joys divine and unseen. It tends to a purpose, ever carrying me higher towards the fullest good.

I have finished my sixth chapter with a full-length portrait of John the Baptist, which I should like you to see. There is enormous vigour and personality in

these Gospel characters. I only hope that they may not lose, in my book, that energy and beauty which they owe to the Spirit Who dwelt in them. This is my ambition ; that even unbelievers may be forced to acknowledge the superb greatness of the Gospel, and that, though withholding their belief, they may yield it their respect.

Did I tell you that I have now finished one third of the book ? When I return from Paris I shall set about the Baptism of Jesus, and His Temptation in the desert. The further I advance in my task the greater becomes my adoration of Christ : His life and His words fill me with admiration. Compared with Him what are the world's best and most masterful men, its greatest intelligences, its paragons of energy and charm ?

Whoever is able to infuse some drops of the divine essence we call the Gospel, into the veins of this worn-out and so-called 'decadent' generation, will be the sole agent of its rejuvenescence and restoration.

I inclose a faded photograph for you, my daughter : that is all that remains of my beard now.

Good-bye. I have no time for more ; but what do words matter ? You know quite well that I am always near you, anxious to keep you in the regions where I dwell, and to rescue you from what is not worthy of arresting you for a single moment. Yours.

155

Paris : November 25, 1887.

My dear Daughter,—I leave Paris to-morrow, and shall return to my dear solitude for which I hunger and thirst. The work on which I am engaged is my

very life. I am entirely absorbed in it to the exclusion of everything else: it has mastered all my thoughts. My ardent desire is that it may succeed in presenting the glowing image of Christ, in His divine and human beauty, to the eyes of this generation, uneasy, tired, exhausted, starved, and fearful of what is to come!

At present it is in the hands of a lot of charlatans who amuse it, corrupt it, and entice it to evil, causing it to swallow an unlimited quantity of poisonous narcotics. Has not the time come for it to drink the living water which is of Christ, and which alone can quench its thirst?

I can see nothing superior to the Bible, which is ever the living Book above all; and not only living but life-giving. I put it to the proof every day, and am puzzled to understand by what sad mischance it is so neglected by people in general, and even by those who look higher than earth and thirst after perfection.

It is the same with mankind in general as with individuals—a movement upward or downward. It has its periods of alertness and depression. In our poor country we are passing through a time of heaviness, when everything tends in a downward direction.

I have been giving spiritual instruction here to the elder girls under Mère Samuel's care, and to the little flock which comes to Rue Saint-Lazare to find pasture and a streamlet of living water. It has been a great help to me: faithful hearts and well-disposed souls afford one great encouragement. The help one is enabled to give them is returned in blessings.

Mlle. de M. came from Nancy to take part in the Retreat. We often talked about you, and she is

evidently very fond of you. Mme. Commanville also mentioned you with kindness.

I leave here to-morrow at eleven, and I am writing this in a great hurry in my scanty leisure time.

Young M. and his wife came also to see me, and I offered them my services.

Do not get too engrossed in card playing; amuse yourself, but do not get excited. What an amount of sheer loss of time, my poor child, and life so short too! And it costs so much effort to win even a little divine light and some feeble goodness. I am glad to hear you are on good terms again with E.

Good-bye. I must not write more. I pray God to keep your soul fixed in sublime affection, such as uplifts and strengthens, such as is directed upon Him Who is Infinite.

I give you my blessing with all my heart, and I like to think that, as your thoughts turn upon me in my solitude, you share somewhat in my life of sacrifice. Yours.

156

Flavigny: December 25, 1887.

My dear Daughter,—Your last letter never reached me. I waited for it in vain, and this has been the only reason why I have not written.

There is nothing to record in my life, which flows on devoid of incident, silent and untroubled. It is the life of a workman continually confronted with fresh problems; who experiences in turn grief and joy, struggle and victory, anguish and rapture, darkness and light, dejection and courage, gloomy night and glorious sunrise, storms and calms. I am writing my eighth chapter entitled 'The Withdrawal into the Desert and the Temptation of Jesus.' The

account of this in the first and third Gospel is full of mystery. Long meditation on every word is needed to elucidate it, and much address to convey the meaning in *human language*. But perseverance and the strength given by God to His servants overcome all things.

This very day last year I was at Bethlehem ; I spent Christmas night in the cave where Jesus was born, and that night remains one of my dearest memories. I have been describing in my book to-day what I felt in that spot where Jesus was born and was pleased to live ; which has preserved for ever somewhat of the bright glory and odour bestowed by His presence.

Years bring changes : twenty-five years ago I received priesthood, and so I celebrated my silver wedding to-day. I am becoming quite patriarchal, but one's soul still goes on growing in God's eternal youth, for nothing can grow old which is flooded by eternal light. Decay is this world's law : it is checked at the threshold of Eternity.

From my place of solitude, where I sit absorbed in my work, I do but cast hasty glances now and then at the worries of our country. Politics disgust me ; scandal saddens me ; the evident tokens of decay everywhere cause me depression.

Until my work sets me free to do acts of mercy, I cannot go to help the dying, awake the slumbering, and console the afflicted. All will come in due time. We must wait that time in faith and patience, doing nothing before the hour arrives. Mine is late, the eleventh hour. No matter ! so long as it is the hour of God, all is well.

My best wishes for the New Year. You know what my desires are for you : a commentary could

add nothing to them, and your heart has no need of it.

Tell Father L. that I do not forget him and will write in a few days.

Good-bye, my daughter. I send you my blessing and a love not of this world.

157

Flavigny: May 28, 1888.

My Daughter,—I have received your letter from Moscow, and am glad to think that you are on the march for home—by round-about paths, across rivers, seas, and mountains!

I pray God that His Holy Spirit may be with you and protect you amid the many chances of your journey. True, Providence has given you a *winged* nature, and there is nothing more useful than wings by which to escape from what is harsh, saddening, hindering, and painful on the journey.

If you do not reach Dijon till the end of June it will be almost impossible for me to go to see you. I have to be there, at the Bishop's, from the 12th to the 15th, to read him some chapters of my book, and I could not leave my solitude again without serious reason. It would be best for you to come to Flavigny. Thus you would rest awhile under my roof, and draw refreshment for soul and spirit from that source at which I drink.

Let me know, my child, when you set foot on your native soil, and tell me what your plans are.

I send you these few lines in the thick of work. No need to write when I hope to see you so soon.

I give you my blessing from the depth of my heart, and pray God may endue you with all that

illuminates, calms, upraises, transforms—in short, makes holy. Yours.

158

Bishop's Palace, Dijon: June 20, 1888.

My Daughter,—I am spending three days at Dijon to show the Bishop my latest chapters; to-morrow I return to Flavigny, where I shall hope to see you soon. It will be nice to welcome you to my green-leaved retreat, where you must rest and breathe the divine atmosphere for one or two whole days.

Lucie has written to ask whether she may come with you. Such a request cannot be refused, and you have acted generously in giving her the same reply as I did. From one point of view it is better that you should not come alone. Circumstances arranged by the fatherly hand of God are happier than the arrangements we ourselves attempt.

Hélène must come as well; then we shall have the trio complete. Give her my affectionate regards and reproaches, for I have not heard from her for an age. But I know she is faithful and true in her affections, and am sure that, though far away, she prays that my work may be as God would have it.

You must let me know punctually, a day beforehand, at what time you will arrive. You will find a carriage at Darcey to bring you to Flavigny. When you are under my roof I will read you all I can of my 'Life of Christ.' It has got on well since last September, but a great deal remains to be done. You will be an encouragement to me, dear child, for workers often flag. Their arms fall from sheer weariness, they experience bitterness and a

consciousness from time to time of all their weakness, impotence, nothingness. And a friendly voice and hand serve to uplift them again. Good-bye, my dear daughter. I bless you, and am waiting for you. Yours.

159

Flavigny : July 1, 1888.

My Daughter,—I am so glad your visit to me in my retreat gave you pleasure and did you good—as much good as pleasure. I wish you could have stayed longer to see me in my work, prayers, and life. Then you would understand where I gain that power which raises me above the earth, protecting me from its currents, its mirages and magnetism.

You would also have seen me in my sufferings. The peace and calm of the true disciples of Jesus are the result of prolonged struggles, and sacrifices continually renewed.

In order to write about Christ we must have made experience, must have lived out His words. These are always made plain by the light of conscience, even when they are a puzzle to the reason. Pray that my work may be good and noble. It is no earthly ambition which makes me wish it, but the ambition of my faith.

What is the little breath of personal triumph? A little wrinkle on the surface of a sea unwrinkled and profound. But to bring back a soul to God and His Christ is indeed a lasting work which will never pass away. This tempts me, who am by nature an apostle.

I rejoice to think, my daughter, that I still possess your soul amid all, and that I remain the bond of union between it and God. Continue in prayer : do not allow the divine essence, which lies

far beneath the surface of your sunny nature, to evaporate. Reduce that surface gradually, and draw inward again after your ardent expansions. It is in the deepest recesses that we find what is eternal and infinite. Death comes from the outside; life from the inside. Good-bye, my dear big daughter. I give you my blessing and abiding love.

160

Flavigny: July 15, 1888.

My Daughter,—I have been hard at work since you were here. I have finished the sixteenth chapter and almost the seventeenth. I am on the subject of the woman who was a sinner—Mary Magdalene. It is an episode which is very affecting to me, and I want to present it as I feel it—with vigour tempered by restraint. Exquisite things demand a light touch, but yet not so light as to lack firmness.

The Gospel possesses this precious quality: the language is lofty and full of colour, the foreground stands out in a blaze of light, while the horizon stretches into infinite distance. From an artistic point of view it cannot be surpassed.

Pray for me. Do not let your soul grow faint in the vanity of this world, which is a passing show, a deception, poverty, wretchedness, emptiness. Matter is the substance of a dream; all that is palpable, tangible, and sensible is a delusion. Actual reality is the spirit.

It is not in the power of man, alas! to transform other men. Had Jesus been but a man, He could never have changed Mary Magdalene. This ideal conversion is one of the marks of the Godhead of Him, Who called Himself the Son of Man.

Without Christ, we can but drag about in our misery, a prey to instincts more or less refined. Leaning from my rock, begirt with waves, holding fast to Him, I stretch out my hand to those struggling in the water, ready to give my life to save them.

Our world of to-day fills me with sadness. It writhes in impotence, dreaming of things divine, but attaining to nought but shadows. It will end by despairing of everything, and that despair will be its salvation.

Good-bye, my daughter. I thank you all the same for your grudging wishes. Be kind. Those who work hard in austerity, as I do, have the right to expect support from their friends. I have nothing in this world but them. I have sacrificed all, refused all; I have nothing but them—and God.

It is a happy lot, for it is part of His own which Christ has given me. I give you my blessing, desiring that you may become, like Magdalene, a friend—a favoured friend—of Christ.

161

Flavigny : July 29, 1888.

My Daughter,—I have been quite in the vein for work since your visit. I am finishing the third chapter, and shall begin the fourth on Tuesday or Wednesday at the latest. It gives me the greatest satisfaction to see the work progressing. Work always brings its own reward; and mine, having a divine character, obtains me a better one. God is good in that He has given me this work to do, for truly it is His Spirit Who has led me by devious ways,

while I have simply obeyed the compelling power. My only merit consists in having obeyed the guiding of circumstances.

I have taken especial pains over the moving incident of the sinful woman of Magdala, whence Mary took her name of Magdalene. I shall love to read you my account. Whatever opinion I may have of my own work, I like to know how it affects the feelings of my friends. I am anxious also to see what effect it will produce on my adversaries. But the enemy is not obliging. He is on the watch, and looking out for the moment when it is too late to correct or modify a statement. What you tell me of your plans about going to Saulxines after your season at Aix, and returning to Dijon (after Saulxines) towards the end of August, seems quite feasible. I see nothing to prevent it at present, and do not anticipate any obstacle.

All is in God's hands; what He wills is sure to come to pass, and what He allows to happen will turn to good. I have the fatalism of the Orientals; only theirs is gloomy, while mine is glad. It is an enormous help, my dear daughter, to believe, not in a blind force—immense, resistless, and inexorable—which rules the universe and its worlds, but in a Heavenly Father, personal and loving, as Jesus has revealed Him. I have absorbed this belief into the very marrow of my bones and fabric of my flesh, and in it I shall continue to the end with the unshaken confidence of a child.

The man who places himself in the presence of Jesus with perfect sincerity, and free from the bondage of that clever nonsense called 'the culture of the age,' receives transformation as the reward of his courage. My own experience convinces me of

this every day, and I want those I love to learn the secret of my faith and life.

In the midst of the whirl of life which surrounds you now, my daughter, keep what is best in you hidden in the depth. Turn your eyes towards what is lasting. The heights of Flavigny are, as it were, a beacon; look at them from afar.

My constant prayer is for the growth of your spiritual life. I send you my tender and abiding love.

162

Flavigny: May 23, 1889.

My Daughter,—I am working exceedingly hard at the last chapters of my book. I have two more months before me of grinding, ceaseless toil; but after that I shall go to Paris and we shall be able to meet.

As to Victorine, I only knew of her happiness—the birth of her child. Tell her how grieved I am to hear of her sad bereavement. Tell poor Camille, too, how much I sympathise with her in the loss of her son.

Death deals cruel blows. We must expect them at any time in this life, where we draw breath but to die; and die by slow fire, like victims lapped by the flames that will not consume them at once. Our poor human life is full of sorrows. Happy are they who know the only Consoler.

My blessing on you, my daughter.

163

Flavigny: June 28, 1889.

My Daughter,—I am wholly absorbed in finishing my work. I feel like a man dragged back to this

wretched world, with all my thoughts filled with those eternal matters made so sweet to me by the life of Jesus.

Pray for me. When I have finished it—in a fortnight, or three weeks at the latest—I shall write to you.

Yet why write? Is not my laborious seclusion worth many volumes? And what am I to expect of my friends but at least to share my ceaseless efforts, my prayers and self-sacrifice?

I do not forget you, my daughter. I never cease to pray that Christ may reveal to you His light, which displays the vanity of all things; His Spirit, Which upraises us above transitory matters; and His Love, which bestows eternal peace. Yours.

164

Paris: July 21, 1889.

My Daughter,—Just a hasty line to remind you of the affecting incident of Mary Magdalene, and to tell you that the work is finished! It will only take me another fortnight to read it over before sending it to the printer, who is waiting for it.

I intend retiring to Arcueil in absolute, unbroken solitude in order to go over it thoroughly.

I shall be in Dijon, at the Bishop's, about August 16; if you come into Burgundy about that time, you will find me there. May God keep you; may His providence be ever with you! I bless you, my daughter, and I need not tell you what will be my prayer for you to-morrow! Yours.

165

Flavigny: October 3, 1889.

My Daughter,—I write these few hurried lines to say that I cannot be in Paris before the 6th. You will find me at Rue du Bac on the 7th; I shall expect you about one o'clock. I shall be backwards and forwards between Paris and Arcueil. I have to correct my second proofs, and time is getting short. Directly I have done this, I shall return post-haste to Flavigny to write the Preface, which will take about five weeks. Then I am off to Rome, and then: then—as God wills.

Life becomes fuller and busier as it reaches nearer the goal. I am very conscious of this fulness and hurry just now. However, these gradually subside; God gives peace to those who come before Him.

Good-bye for the present, my daughter. I send you my hearty blessing.

166

Flavigny: November 18, 1889.

My Daughter,—I am writing my Preface in my dear retreat at Flavigny, where I shall have spent the happiest days of my militant life—a life full of hard work and opposition. Everything will be finished by the middle of December. Since you are in such a happy spiritual state, pray that God may assist my work and defend it from the wicked.

My book is now at Rome. I leave it to its fate, without fear and without pride. It has its proper worth, which man can neither increase nor diminish; and, whatever that worth may be, it is due to the Spirit of Christ Which animates it.

I am quite confident as to the correctness of my terminology, and the soundness of my doctrine in the

matter of the Humanity of Jesus, and His widening knowledge. I have studied theology all my life, and should be indeed an idiot if I did not know how to use technical terms correctly. Besides, I have not the least hesitation in accepting whatever slips, inaccuracies, or even mistakes I may have made. In the course of a thousand pages I may well have overlooked some, and I shall be the first to criticise myself with severity.

As one advances in life the soul expands and frees itself. Henceforth I have but one object in life—to make a good end. Whether it be in the midst of fierce conflict or in abandonment; in the bustle of work or the peace of solitude; in the depths of a Carthusian monastery in France; or far away among the negroes of Africa or the Indians of the Rocky Mountains, matters not. I am ready for anything God requires of me. All I desire is to glorify Christ Whose I am. The manner of so doing is immaterial; my mind is set only on the purpose.

In saying this, my daughter, I am offering for your consideration the best my soul contains, the fruit which God has ripened there despite my afflictions. This should help you to steer your own life through this empty world.

Good-bye. I assure you again of my faithful and profound affection. What God has sown in good ground never dies.

I bless you in Christ's name. Yours.

167

Flavigny: January 11, 1890.

Many thanks, my dear daughter, for your good wishes for my book. I reckon it as part of myself,

and indeed the most precious part. I hear that it has been well received at Rome, and will obtain approbation without undergoing any mutilation. I am awaiting the official approbation with the patience of those who work for Christ; but it will indeed be welcome when it comes. The day when it will be in my hands is written in heaven, and all I have to do is to wait its dawning.

I am going to Paris on the 23rd to bless the marriage of Mlle. E.; then I set out for Dijon, where I am to preach a charity sermon on February 2.

How good it is, my daughter, to rest awhile and regain one's health after severe labour! I feel like a farm-labourer on a Sunday, looking lazily at the stubble field where he has reaped and stacked good shocks of wheat.

I shall not go to Rome until later; a journey there just now would not do. The papers would at once say that I had been obliged to go to defend my book.

God be with you, dear child, and may Christ, in His infinite goodness, lead you in His steps towards His light. I bless you in His name, having no more ardent wish than to see you a true disciple of Him to Whom I have devoted my life.

168

Arcueil: April 12, 1890.

Yes, my daughter, my book is approved by Rome, and approved in most flattering terms. So this child of my sorrows, being consecrated, is now armed for the fight! May he go forward and triumph, since God has bestowed on him breastplate and sword!

I have turned schoolmaster. Providence is indeed leading me by strange, unexpected ways. I follow blindly, without ambition or desire, glad only to be allowed to serve the Master to Whom I belong according to His will.

Never, never have I cherished for an instant the hope of preaching at Notre-Dame. This may appear strange, but it is true.

When I have settled down to the work of my new undertaking here at Arcueil, and have finished the last correction of proofs of my book (which will take quite two months), I shall resume preaching, in some church or other, without any ostentation or drawing attention to the matter. So that is settled, my daughter.

Mgr. d'Hulst wrote me a line on his card the other day to congratulate me. I replied, thanking him, and I sincerely hope he may fulfil at Notre-Dame the great duties of a doctor, apologist, and apostle.

Good-bye, my daughter. I send you these lines very much as a commander-in-chief might, who had a whole world to occupy with his troops.

I give you my heartiest blessing, and pray you may be a great Thérèse at the feet of Christ.

169

École Albert-le-Grand, Arcueil : July 11, 1890.

My poor dear Daughter,—I can easily bear all the epithets you shower upon me in your outspoken criticism ; but I do not intend to make the slightest change in my decision.

I have acted, after much consideration and not by impulse, in full knowledge of my responsibility.

If I had felt able to accept the conditions imposed by Father X., I should have done so without hesitation; but my conscience forbids it.

Whosoever, having put his hand to the plough, looks back is not worthy.

I feel sorry about it; but even if my own mother had begged me on her knees to do otherwise I could not do it.

I unreservedly accept responsibility for my actions. I do not pretend to infallibility, but I trust the guidance of my conscience. If I am wrong, it is an honest mistake; but I do nothing without previous prayer and consideration.

I do not want people who come with me under certain reservations. In battle you need soldiers who fear nothing.

I do not profess to judge Father X. Doubtless he has reasons for acting as he has done; I, too, have mine.

The Lacordaire preparatory school will remain open, and if one of these days our friend chooses to come, he will not find the door shut. Though he was not a worker hired at the first hour, he may be one of the eleventh.

Good-bye, dear child. I wish you a peaceful time at your mother's, and pray that your peace may be the peace of God. Yours.

170

Contrexéville: August 29, 1890.

My dear Daughter,—You need not be anxious about me, as I am not seriously ill. A little accident—quite trifling—caused Dr. X. to send me to Contrexéville, and the waters have done wonders for

me. I am leaving for Burgundy on Sunday, and shall see the new Archbishop of Bordeaux. Then I shall go to Flavigny to rest awhile in that retreat I love so well, and shall return to Arcueil between September 8 and 10.

I am longing to get back to the battlefield, and to fulfil what God has given me to do. I am delighted to devote myself to this new work of which I bear the whole responsibility. However difficult it may be, my faith in Him Who is leading me is my support.

I expect you are very happy in the midst of friends. I should love to sit beside them and gaze at my dear mountains. Do tell them so.

Good-bye. Kiss the little ones for me, and give my love to the big ones.

My two schools are doing well and filling up as I hoped. They cannot but be successful, because God is with us.

I bless you, my daughter, and send you my love. Yours in Christ.

171

Arcueil: November 24, 1890.

My Daughter,—I was so glad to hear from you. The success of my 'Life of Jesus Christ' does not turn my head in the least. There is only one thing in which I am interested: that is, the diffusion of the *good savour* of Him I adore. The book has reached its sixteenth thousand, and the editor thinks it will touch twenty thousand before the end of the year.

I want the mass of the people to be brought under the influence of the Gospel, and I hope my wish will be realised in a short time, when a cheaper edition will be published.

I pay no heed to the praise or blame of my reviewers: the former affords me no pleasure, nor the latter pain. What does either matter? The worth of books is decided by their intrinsic value and their favour in the sight of God; human opinion adds or diminishes nothing.

I am full of work relating to my two schools, which form my constant occupation. It is impossible to get my ideas carried out, and to make my influence felt, except by the exertion of a watchful energy always at hand to sweep away obstacles from the path —or shatter them.

I shall not draw breath freely till the ship is fairly launched in deep water, clear of the shoals. Meanwhile, my place is on the bridge superintending the crew.

I rejoice to think that, by devoting myself to such a work as this, I am fulfilling my duty and obeying God's will.

Could not 'Jesus Christ' be translated into Russian and circulated among the people? I should think that such a religious, and innately Christian race as the Slavonic, would gladly welcome the great history of Jesus. Tell me what you think about it, and get the opinions of educated Russians you meet.

Good-bye, my dear daughter. I send you my blessing and am yours in Christ.

172

Arcueil: January 12, 1892.

My Daughter,—Many thanks for your faithful and filial remembrance of me. I pray that Christ may keep you, and ever maintain in the deep places

of your soul that fire of divine life which must never languish.

I am going to Bordeaux to preach in aid of the Catholic Union of France, and to bear witness to the truth in the midst of our religious and political discords.

I shall preach next Sunday, the 17th, and ask you to pray that I may continue to the end consistent with my holy calling. This world is wretched and perverse. The men gifted with intellect are, for the most part, but pagans of an inferior stamp. They make one regret those who, before the coming of Christ, threw the light of their genius on the dark background of ignorance.

If only they could be brought out of their wretched state I would gladly give my life for it.

Good-bye. I bless you from the depth of my heart.

173

Paris–Arcueil : March 11, 1892.

My Daughter,—I am sending you six copies of my *inflammatory* address at Bordeaux. It has unchained a storm, but that was to be expected. These things had to be said, and under the same circumstances I should repeat them.

My Lenten addresses have begun : the first drew an immense congregation to the Madeleine.

I am preaching on the Divinity of Jesus Christ ; the greatest and most moving subject that the human intellect can consider.

Beseech Christ that I may bear Him witness before this generation, which is dying, far off from Him.

I send you these few hurried lines in the midst of much work.

Good-bye. I lay my hand upon you—the hand of a father upon his daughter. Yours.

174

Arcueil: July 23, 1892.

My dear Daughter,—I was delighted to receive your kind name's-day wishes, and I prayed sincerely for you on the 15th and 22nd.

You will find me in Paris in September. Till then I shall be for a time at Contrexéville and afterwards at Flavigny.

Look upwards, far above earth. Life passes away, leaving nothing but our love of Christ and of souls. My affection for you is a divine one, and therefore eternal. Yours.

175

Arcueil: January 1893.

My dear Daughter,—I send you all the good wishes dictated by my sincere and holy affection for you. I beseech Christ to bestow on you the fulness of those blessings which are His alone, and which He gives without stint to His devoted servants.

The Grand Duke W. has a noble character—high-minded and firm, religious and upright. He quite alarmed me by the freedom and simplicity of his manner in conversation.

I am going to Dijon to give a series of addresses. Pray for me, dear child, as I pray for you. May God have you in His keeping! Yours.

176

Coublevie: November 25, 1895.

My Child,—Thank you for your letter and for the Russian books. I am writing to you from the Monastery of Coublevie, at the foot of my mountains, whither I have come for a few days' rest.

I needed solitude and calm; I needed to be steeped anew in God, far from mankind.

And here I have found what I sought—divine refreshment, the brightness of God, the serene power necessary to fight the good fight.

Yesterday at Voiron I gave a striking address, so they say, on the Power of the Church to enroll and arm conscientious men, with the purpose of establishing and restoring the reign of Justice. The point of the address was that the voice of public opinion in this country cries out for uprightness and justice.

I wonder why God has recalled me from the battle, and taken away from me the sword of speech. It must be well, since He has done so; it is not regret that I feel so much as surprise. But I desire to remain a willing instrument of His Holy Spirit.

Good-bye, my daughter. I shall be in Paris on Thursday, and shall hope to hear from you. I bless you from my soul. May Christ have you in His keeping!

177

Rome: August 17, 1896.

My Daughter,—I received your letter at Rome, on my return from a long journey across the Peloponnesus to Athens. I shall be back in Paris by next Thursday or Friday, and will do what you ask. It would take too long to give you an account of

my journey. When we meet we shall have a good talk; I need only say now that all goes well.

I have had a long interview with the Pope, and have been received with great honour by the Hellenic Government. Now that the question of my schools is satisfactorily settled, I shall resume the helm of the ship. Pray God that the sea may be calm. Yours.

178

Arcueil: November 9, 1896.

My Daughter,—You must be plunged in grief and mourning. The sudden death of your friend Mgr. d'Hulst must have been a great blow to you. I deeply sympathise with your sorrow, and pray God of His mercy to reward one of His bravest servants.

I read your account of the Franco-Russian fêtes. It produced on me the effect of a cinematograph, so true to facts was it, and so extraordinarily full of vivacity and movement. Yours in God.

179

Arcueil: 1898.

Without doubt, my daughter, some remembrances are eternal, possessed of never-dying life. Such are those which recall what was good, noble, and holy in our past life. We have some of these in common. How should it be possible to efface what the Spirit of God has written in the depths of our heart and conscience? Who could succeed in doing this?

It is part of ourselves, the very tissue of our immortal soul.

But as a good follower of St. Paul, I ever push forward towards what is to come; forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those

things that are above and before, to God, to Whom my whole being is yielded up.

It is in Him we find again the past, quickened into life, but purified and ennobled. Thither you must follow me, and in Him we shall never cease to be united.

Battle is my very life. When my arms grow too weak to fight, I shall upraise them in prayer to God to take me from this world, for I should pine away in sorrow.

May the Power from on high possess and guide you!

F. H. Didon.

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